

ADVENTIST REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 2018: THE RECITAL + LEAN IN A LITTLE CLOSER + SEVEN SIGNS YOU'RE RAISING RESPONSIBLE, HAPPY CHILDREN + CREATING CHRISTIAN CIVILITY + THE DIVINE REACTION TO CORRUPTION + SEASONED AND LIT

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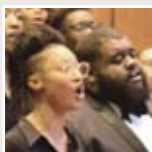
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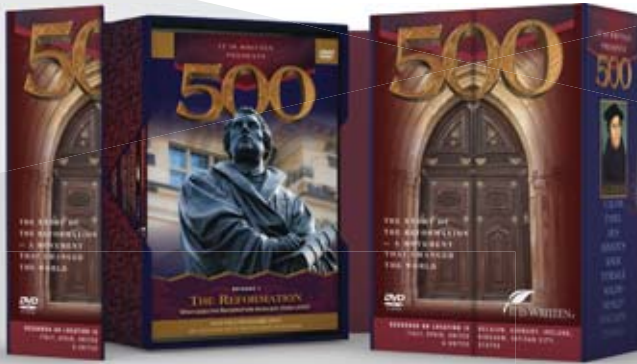


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BILL KNOTT

This remnant movement still hungers for the evidence that we are Spirit-led.

Spirit-led

The still small voice is unrelenting. All through the worship service the pattern of familiar prompting reverberates: *Find Steve. Talk with Steve. Pray with Steve.*

I know of nothing extraordinary that would make this conversation necessary. But with a kind of grudging grace, I seek out the Spirit's nominee and find him pensively alone in the church foyer.

Struggling to disguise my awkwardness, I finally murmur the question I've been framing for the past hour: "Is there some special reason I felt so impressed to pray for you this morning?"

His eyes brim instantly with tears, and he wraps me in an unexpected hug.

■ "You haven't heard, have you?" he asks, brushing away the tears. "Janet was just diagnosed this week with stage 3 breast cancer, and we're trying to make sense of all that's happening."

The voice at the other end of the phone line is passionate and pleading. "And Father," he's saying, "I don't want to pray for just the surface of Bill's life—that he will be safe in his travels; that his health will be good. You know, Lord, there's something he's seeking You about."

Stunned, I listen in rapt silence as he intercedes for me about a matter that only this morning I placed before the Lord. No other person knows: there's no plausible explanation

for why my friend 6,000 miles away could pray with such specificity about something I believed known only to the Father and to me.

■ Like all committees, this one was composed to illustrate the church's collective embrace of godly diversity. Women, men; seniors and young adults—White, Black, and Brown—crowd around the too-small table. They are charged with hammering out a policy to guide a movement begun with simple structures and a great wariness about "man-made" legislation.

But something happens for which no member prepared, nor even—some confess—could have expected. Prayer happens—deep, pleading prayer—as one by one agendas we brought with us are set aside. We speak in careful, moderate language of positions we don't personally endorse. We listen better than we ever have. We try proposals, waiting for the language that will make consensus possible.

Ninety minutes later the shyest member of the group offers the summation: "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28, NRSV).¹

This remnant movement, born in the windstorm of the Spirit's undeniable activity, still hungers for the evidence that we are Spirit-led and guided by more than our collective acumen. We read the stories of 150 years ago—narratives all charged

with healings, miracles, and unexpected outcomes—and ask ourselves if we are truly the descendants of a generation who lived much closer to the book of Acts. Somberly we wonder, "Would we know if the Spirit left us? Or would we go on opening the doors and planning the events for those who love routine and sameness?"

The great good news is that the Spirit never leaves His own—that even in our moments (weeks or years) of personal and corporate unresponsiveness, we don't cease to be the ones with whom He strives. A hundred signs are all about us—some as personal as the answers to deeply private prayer; others found in thoughtful, calibrated decisions taken by the leaders who serve us or the tens of thousands of local congregations that are collectively the theater of grace.

According to the apostle John, the churches of his era received the counsel sent—yes, seven times—from heaven: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Rev 3:22, NRSV).

Now would be a good time to be paying close attention.

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The final mark of the beast may not be so much Saturday versus Sunday, as much as it is about a power forcing people against their will into some form of worship.

STAN MARTIN, HIGH POINT, NORTH CAROLINA

A SPIRITUAL FEAST

Definitely a spiritual feast! The July issue arrived on a Friday. The next day at Sabbath School someone brought up the struggle some of her family members were having with the church's stand on the Trinity. Later that day I had my first chance to look at the latest *Review* and was stunned to see this topic featured!

I read all the articles and was greatly blessed and will share this issue with this individual. I also found "The Apocalyptic Monsters Category" by Clifford Goldstein fascinating, and also very blessed by "James White Finds a Way" and "Death Cleaning."

Nothing in this issue didn't find a way into my heart. Thank you for such an inspiring magazine.

Debra Eskildsen

Erdmore, Michigan

WHAT WILL THE MARK OF THE BEAST REALLY LOOK LIKE?

I read with interest the articles by Mark Finley, Lael Caesar, and Ellen White regarding end-time events and the mark of the beast (June 2018).

I appreciated Finley's acknowledgment that our traditional understanding of the mark of the beast may have

been somewhat limited. It has often occurred to me that the Sabbath, as with all commandments, must be interpreted through the words of Jesus Christ to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind." And second: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt.



22:37, 39) The Sabbath commandment epitomizes this idea—we remember and keep the Sabbath holy out of love for God, and we do not force those who are within our spheres of influence to work out of love for them, and in obedience to God's command.

Stan Martin

High Point, North Carolina

HOPE FOR BROKEN PEOPLE

We appreciated the article "Daddy's Workbench" (June 2018). We are all broken people, and we can all relate to this story written so beautifully by Heather Vandenhoven. We hold services each week at a women's prison. We felt impressed to make copies of this article for the women there. The article gave them hope, knowing that whatever bad things have happened in their lives, they can bring their brokenness to the only One who can fix them.

Corbin and Jane Pitman

Dayton, Tennessee

NOT ABOUT US

I have always appreciated and enjoyed Bill Knott's editorials. With regard to "Not About Us" (May 2018), I echo all that was said with regard to the varied

worship styles that seem to continually evolve. I, too, struggle with what I hear from my church's praise team each week. The rocking, swaying of bodies; the banging, roaring, and clanging sounds that emanate from the musical instruments bring sadness and despair to my soul.

So rather than thinking resentful thoughts from my human heart, I bow my head in prayer, interceding for my own soul. I know that the God who reads hearts will reward each of us accordingly.

Vinette Hylton
Georgia



CORRECTION

In a photograph that accompanied the article "Roland R. Hegstad, Longtim *Liberty* Editor, Dies at 92," the caption misidentified one of those pictured. The correct names are: B. L. Archbold (left), V. E. Garber, Roland Hegstad, Irene Wakeham, and Denton Rebok. We apologize for our error.—Editors

IN A FEW WORDS...

ELLA MAY HARTLEIN, CREDITED WITH THE INVENTION OF THE HAYSTACK, DIES AT 98

I started going to an Adventist church when I was about 18. Soon after, I was offered something called "haystack." I remember thinking, "Boy, you guys may be taking this vegetarian thing too far."

Rob Adams, Via Web

TED WILSON ARMS ADVENTIST EDUCATORS WITH AN ELLEN WHITE BOOK

Thank God for President Wilson highlighting the blueprint of Adventist education. There should be more of this in all divisions, while there is yet time. Every Adventist teacher should read and reflect on *Education* before teaching in our schools.

Bing Parinas, Via Web

LEADER BECOMES HIGHEST RANKING ADVENTIST CHAPLAIN IN THE U.S. NAVY RESERVE

Good on [Washington Johnson II]. The military needs godly chaplains, as does every institution in the country. We are all in the Lord's army first though, and have a responsibility to our great commander to follow His orders.

Stephen De Bruyn

YOUR TURN

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.

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The Adventist Church has a long history on Pitcairn Island, which has about 54 residents—mostly descendants of sailors involved in the mutiny on the H.M.S. Bounty in 1789.
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NEWS



BRANDY ROBERTS/GC COMMUNICATION

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE TAKES STEP FORWARD IN UNITY PROCESS

DOCUMENT TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE 2018 ANNUAL COUNCIL

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW/ADVENTIST WORLD AND ANN

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's General Conference Administrative Committee voted on Tuesday, July 17, a document recommended by the Unity Oversight Committee. The recommendations came after nine months of listening and consultation with church entities around the world, and outline a process of addressing entities not in compliance with the actions of a General Conference (GC) Session, the GC Executive Committee, or working policy. The outlined process includes setting up a number of compliance review committees that will address specific issues of non-compliance and will make recommendations to the

General Conference Administrative Committee.

The Unity Oversight Committee was informed by quantitative and qualitative data gathered from church leaders worldwide as well as dialogues with the 13 world divisions, General Conference Leadership Council, and GC institutions. Comments from Executive Committee members during previous Annual Councils were also considered.

The Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research was tasked with developing a questionnaire and administering a survey of all union and division presidents worldwide. All those surveyed submitted a response, even though in some cases

they chose not to answer all questions. The results of the survey were published in a previous article, and showed that a majority of the world Church's union presidents favored some kind of process for dealing with non-compliance.

Following standard process and protocol, the document voted on July 17 by GC ADCOM will also be discussed by the General Conference and Division Officers Committee. It will then be sent to the GC Executive Committee at its Annual Council this October for consideration. 📌

The full document can be read at AdventistReview.org/UnityOversightCommittee



Pastor Adeline (third from left) with some of the Pitcairn baptismal candidates

PHOTO: ADVENTIST RECORD

MIRACLE ON PITCAIRN ISLAND

WITH JUST FIVE MEMBERS LEFT, THE CHURCH WAS SET TO CLOSE.

BY TRACEY BRIDCUTT, ADVENTIST RECORD

When Pastor Jean-Noel Adeline was asked to go to Pitcairn Island, he soon realized he was facing a significant challenge. Before traveling to the tiny, isolated Pacific island, he spoke to one of the five remaining church attendees. According to the church member there, things looked grim.

“He said to me that they had planned to tell the union [church administrative unit] to close the church, to sell the church properties, including the mission house,” said Adeline, a long-time evangelist based at the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference (NZPUC).

“This was because of major tensions among the members. Some of them had not spoken to each other for years. We must remember that they have been in a very difficult situation, without a permanent pastor, for some time.”

The Adventist Church has a long history on Pitcairn Island, which has about 54 residents—mostly descendants of sailors involved in the mutiny on the H.M.S. *Bounty* in 1789. Twenty-two residents are listed as members of the Adventist Church—arguably the most isolated Adventist congregation in the world. The island has no airstrip and no safe harbor. From New Zealand it’s an arduous journey to get there, Adeline pointed out, involv-

ing two flights and two boat trips.

The last full-time pastor spent six years on Pitcairn, until 2011. Since then two pastors from the French Polynesia Mission each spent a year on the island. The last pastor left in 2015 because of ill health.

DESPERATE FOR SPIRITUAL REFRESHING

NZPUC leaders saw that the church members were “desperate for spiritual refreshing,” but the union was unable to find a suitable pastor, according to secretary-treasurer Graeme Drinkall. So the leadership at the union office came up with a plan: send one pastor every quarter of the year, each spending two and a half weeks on the island.

Adeline was the first to visit under this new arrangement. Soon after his arrival he was asked about his strategy to sort out the issues between the church members. “With my hand on my Bible, I said, ‘Listen, I don’t have a plan, but I have this old Book, and I have God, and I believe He has a plan for this island. By His grace I’m going to expound on His Word. I believe God will do something.’”

So the pastor’s mission began. Every evening at 7:00—except Thursdays, when the supply boat arrived—Adeline held a meeting at the church. The first meeting on

Sabbath saw 26 people in the pews, both members and nonmembers. Every morning at 7:00 Adeline held a revival meeting specifically for the church members.

“Slowly but surely the members started to realize that even though the church is about people, first of all, it’s about God,” Adeline said. “It’s about His name, His character, His glory in our midst. It was helping the members to see why we exist as a church—not for ourselves but to be a light to Pitcairn, to help people to see Jesus. We are here to save the lost.”

A MIRACLE UNFOLDS

Adeline shared the impressive changes he began to witness. “From then on, God started to work miraculously,” he said. “Members started to go to the houses of those they had hurt and confessed their sins. It was a miracle to see them at church sitting together, singing, holding hands, praying with each other, crying with each other.”

This became a powerful testimony to all those on the island, including the mayor, who started attending the evening meetings. He encouraged his wife to attend. From 26 attendees on the first Sabbath, 36 came the following Sabbath, and 37 on the final Sabbath. It was a day of celebration, as five baptisms were held in Bounty Bay. An additional five people have requested baptism, including the mayor and his wife.

In a post to her Facebook page, Pitcairn resident Melva Warren

Evans said the outcome was “nothing short of a miracle.”

“I tell you now, miracles can and do happen,” Evans said. “I watched them unfold these past 18 days. Decades-old animosity dried up and blew away by the revelation of our sinful nature when compared to Christ’s character.”

Evans said that they learned to give up self and focus on Jesus. “We stopped looking for fault in others while examining our warped character. We prayed together, for each other and our community. We asked God to, once more, take control. From a community in crisis, in 18 days we have become a community united.”

Adeline said he appreciated the people of Pitcairn Island for their hospitality and warm fellowship. “They are very welcoming and took great care of me,” he said. “It was the privilege of a lifetime to go there; the island is so beautiful, filled with fruit trees and natural wonders.”

With such a significant spiritual transformation under way, Adeline wants the momentum to continue and is appealing to church members throughout the South Pacific to pray for the people on Pitcairn Island.

“This was not physical work; it was spiritual warfare,” he said. “Satan had been trying to claim the church and the people. Only the Spirit of God can penetrate our souls, melt our hearts, smash our pride, and make us new.

“We need people to continue to pray for Pitcairn, so that what is happening there will blossom and bear eternal fruits [sic],” he said. ▀

STUDY FINDS CONNECTION BETWEEN ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER AND VIDEO GAME ADDICTION

RESEARCHERS AT LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY CONFIRM SOME OF SCIENCE’S LATEST FINDINGS.

BY JANELLE RINGER, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEWS

A study by researchers at Loma Linda University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution, says ADHD severity is associated with video game addiction.

The study by Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health researchers found that attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) severity is associated with severity of video game addiction.

The study, “Video Game Addiction, ADHD Symptomatology, and Video Game Reinforcement,” published June 6, 2018, in *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, found that risk of addiction existed regardless of the type of video game played or preferred most.

“This result is consistent with our hypothesis and with prior research, which suggests that people with greater ADHD symptom severity may be at greater risk for developing problematic playing habits,” said Holly E. R. Morrell, associate professor in the Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health and the study’s principal investigator.



The study was released within days of obsessive video game playing being recognized as an international public health concern. The World Health Organization added “gaming disorder” to its *International Classification of Diseases*, eleventh edition, released on June 18, 2018.

Morrell said previous research has estimated that up to 23 percent of people who play video games report symptoms of addiction, which can lead to negative effects on health, well-being, sleep, academics, and socialization.

In the Loma Linda University study the number of hours playing video games was associated with addiction severity. Age was not a factor. Males reported greater addiction severity than females. Morrell and her team tested nearly 3,000 video game players aged 18 to 57 for the study.

Morrell is an expert in the field of addiction. In May she published a study in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, in which she and her coauthors described some of the risks associated with video game addiction, such as physical and mental health problems, as well as problems with social and occupational functioning. ▀



Krankenhaus Waldfriede (Waldfriede Adventist hospital) in Berlin, Germany, where the Desert Flower Center for victims of female genital mutilation is located. In the five years since its launch, the center has helped more than 350 women. PHOTO: WALDFRIEDE KRANKENHAUS

ADVENTIST CENTER IN ITS FIFTH YEAR HELPING VICTIMS OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

AT BERLIN'S WALDFRIEDE HOSPITAL, MORE THAN 350 WOMEN HAVE RECEIVED MEDICAL ATTENTION.

BY LOUISE SCHROEDER, INTER-EUROPEAN DIVISION NEWS

More than 350 victims of female genital mutilation (FGM) have received medical attention at the Desert Flower Center (DFC) located in the Waldfriede Adventist Hospital in Zehlendorf, Berlin, Germany. The center was launched in 2013 with the support of former top model Waris Dirie.

On June 21, 2018, Dirie spoke at the sixth Live Surgery and Symposium, entitled “Innovations in Proctology,” held by Waldfriede Hospital with 300 doctors in attendance. “More Desert Flower Centers must be established around the world,” she said. According to United Nations (UN) statistics, more than 250 million women worldwide are affected by this damaging procedure.

Dirie, 53, became widely known through her biography *Desert Flower* and the film of the same name. In it the native of Somalia, who her-

self was a victim of FGM at the age of 5, describes her path of suffering and recovery. Waldfriede, a co-operating hospital of the Desert Flower Foundation launched by Dirie in Vienna in 2002, is the first institution in the world to look after the victims of female genital mutilation wholistically.

VICTIMS IN GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND

According to the human rights organization Terre des Femmes, based in Berlin, about 500,000 girls and women are affected by female genital mutilation and 180,000 are at risk in the European Union. A 2013 UNICEF report says FGM is practiced in 29 countries, primarily in Africa but also in a few Arab and Asian states, as well as within migrant communities in Europe and North America.

In Germany there are an esti-

ated 25,000 victims of genital mutilation and 2,500 at risk.

The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health estimates that in 2016, 15,000 women and girls living in Switzerland were either affected by FGM or at risk.

GIVING BACK QUALITY OF LIFE

The Desert Flower Center is part of the center for intestinal and pelvic floor surgery at Waldfriede Hospital. It is run by chief physician Roland Scherer, professor of coloproctology. At the DFC women with FGM receive medical help and psychosocial care. Scherer and his team at Waldfriede deal with the consequences of FGM, such as chronic pain, scarring, vaginal-intestinal fistulas, vaginal-bladder fistulas, sphincter injuries, and urinary and fecal incontinence.

At the DFC plastic reconstructive surgery for the reconstruction of the clitoris and the external genitalia is possible, as well as psychosocial care and counseling. “We cannot completely reverse the mutilation, but we can restore their quality of life,” Scherer pointed out. Also, the surgery counteracts risks that threaten women who go through pregnancy and childbirth after FGM.

“All surgeries performed by us are medically based surgeries, so they are covered by health insurance or, if necessary, by the social welfare office in Germany. After all, these are not cosmetic corrections or even cosmetic surgeries,” em-

phasized cooperation partner Uwe von Fritschen, chief physician of the Department of Plastic and Aesthetic Surgery at HELIOS Hospital Emil von Behring, Berlin. For women who come directly from abroad to the DFC in Berlin and have no health insurance, or whose health insurance does not cover the treatment, Waldfriede Hospital covers the costs.

FIGHTING VICTIMS' TRAUMA

DFC medical coordinator and senior physician for surgery Cornelia Strunz reported that most of the women who come for treatment are traumatized. If they desire, women can opt for psychosocial counseling and assistance before, during, or after treatment.

Waldfriede social services instructor Nina Zahn looks after the social interests of patients. Important interlocutors for the women include Evelyn Brenda, originally from Kenya, and Farhia Mohamed, from Somalia. Both come from countries where FGM is practiced. Because of their roots, they understand women's perspectives. They have also worked as interpreters in the team. "It is important to contact the women after they get treatment at the DFC. I want to know how they are doing, even years later," Strunz says.

Strunz also shared that since January 2015 the DFC has held a monthly self-help group. "In group discussions with translators and therapists, women exchange experiences and support each other in coping with problems," she said. ▀

ELLA MAY HARTLEIN, CREDITED WITH THE INVENTION OF THE HAYSTACK, DIES AT 98

DISH IS POPULAR FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN NORTH AMERICA AND ELSEWHERE.

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF

Ella May Hartlein, who for years worked alongside her husband in Adventist academies across the United States, passed away on June 30, 2018, at the age of 98. Hartlein is credited with the invention of the haystack, a dish popular in Seventh-day Adventist Church communal and home gatherings across North America and elsewhere. The story below is adapted from an article published in the Adventist Review on November 26, 2009, telling the story of Hartlein's fortuitous and consequential invention. —Editors

HAYSTACKS OR HARTLEIN SPECIAL?

In the early 1950s Ella May Hartlein and her husband, C. Ray Hartlein, lived at Arizona Academy (now Thunderbird Academy), where her husband was dean of boys. The young family enjoyed dining out at a local Mexican restaurant, and they were fans of the tostadas. Before long the Hartleins moved to Idaho, then on to Iowa, serving at an academy there. With a clear shortage of Mexican restaurants in those locales, the Hartleins missed their beloved tostadas.

One of the faculty members was approached by the local newspaper to share recipes from the faculty women for a small feature article. When the recipes were turned in, a concoction of chips, beans, cheese, and vegetables was labeled "Hartlein Special," for Ella May. From there the dish went forth, though it is unclear when people began referring to it as a "haystack."

Many years later, when a local pastor first came to Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, where Hartlein was a member, she introduced herself to him. He immediately asked, "Are you connected with the Hartlein Special?" The dish and its fame have gone far and wide. Known today as the haystack, it is loved by many the world over. ▀



Ella May Hartlein, credited with the invention of the haystack, passed away on June 30, 2018, at 98.



Anthony Bourdain at the 2014 Peabody Awards

BY PEABODY AWARDS - ANTHONY BOURDAIN, CC BY 2.0

REQUIEM FOR A DISILLUSIONED HEDONIST

WHAT ANTHONY BOURDAIN'S DEATH TAUGHT ME ABOUT FOOD, PLEASURE, AND LIFE'S MEANING.

BY JAROD THOMAS AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

It's been a while, and I still find myself thinking about him.

I distinctly remember the day I walked through the aisles of the public library, pulling a curious-looking book from the shelf. Flipping through the crisp pages, I paused to read a singular account. It was a graphic story of how this man and a group of unnamed elite chefs clandestinely enjoyed eating the delicacy of an endangered species. I put the book down and walked away.

That experience would shape my understanding of Anthony Bourdain. I rarely gave attention to anything he produced, except for oc-

asionally catching a clip of his acclaimed TV series online. On the few occasions I saw him, I was fascinated by his work.

AFTER YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE

Bourdain had an incredible job: roam the world, engage fascinating people, and eat their food. A natural storyteller and lover of people, Bourdain exposed those of us in the increasingly isolationist West to situations and stories that we needed to hear, and for this he deserves respect. He did all this while living his dream.

After he took his own life, many

wondered how a person in such a fortunate position could give up so easily. But the signs were there. In a profanity-punctuated *New Yorker* article in February 2017 Bourdain had posed a piercing question: "What do you do after your dreams come true?" The words are haunting.

Bourdain was a self-styled aesthetic enthusiast. On some levels I would put myself in that category. I have an appreciation for aesthetics and pursue illusory perfection. I enjoy writing with German fountain pens, Japanese ink, and French paper. I can tell you the farm on which the best peaches I've ever tasted are grown. I know it's weird, but I buy heirloom beans from the American Southwest that were cultivated by ancient Puebloan cliff dwellers. I've enjoyed the best Persian nougat, brought from Isfahan, milky white and studded with pistachios. Don't get me started talking about pizza.

LIFE IS MORE THAN FOOD

I could go on, but who really cares? Those of us who seek to follow the example of Jesus should be arrested by His words, rippling through time, speaking to our generation of hedonists: "Is not life more than food?" (Matt. 6:25).*

Even Anthony Bourdain recognized the troubled reality of his profession. In Buenos Aires, Argentina, he was on the couch of a psychologist, lamenting his sporadic depression, which was undoubtedly tied to the nature of his work.

"George Orwell said something that really upset me," Bourdain

Where is the pleasure in a bit of sizzling gristle in the bottom of a pan, or a drink from the murky dregs of a broken cistern? The Infinite One offers us enduring satisfaction.

said on his program in 2016. “He talked about [how] human beings are essentially tubes into which we shove food. And this is my job.”

He seemed to struggle with the superficiality of his work, hinting that conspicuous consumption and the pursuit of pleasure for pleasure’s sake lead to a shallow, meaningless existence. He spoke freely about his continuing struggles with drugs and alcohol—famous anesthetics intended to cover personal pain. Even though it paid the bills, the pleasures of eating and drinking, or chasing after any other misguided passions of the human appetite, brought no lasting satisfaction. These pursuits never will.

THE TRUE MEANING OF PLEASURE

At the same time, though, a meaningful life does not consist of self-deprivation. God is not interested in keeping us from experiential pleasure. Rather He wants to help us discover the true meaning of pleasure and to lead us to sources of pleasure without hangovers, shame, and regret.

Consider the existence God intended for Adam and Eve: live in and tend to a tropical paradise, eat freely of the most exotic, tree-ripened fruit, and enjoy sexual intimacy with your life partner. “Be fruitful and multiply,” He said, “and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Eden was pleasure. God’s purpose in placing humankind at the epicenter of pleasure was to lead them to Himself as their Creator—the

one who proclaimed all things good and very good.

David was right when he said, “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11). And Orwell was staggeringly wrong when he distilled consumption down to its basic biological necessity. If this were the case, what are taste buds for? And don’t tell me that this is simply an evolutionary development to keep us from inadvertently eating a toxic berry.

GOD’S LIFESAVING PARAMETERS

God created us to experience pleasure *within His parameters*. “Yes, eat freely of the fruit,” God says, “but there is a boundary that you are not to cross.” There is no such thing as freedom without restriction. So God established a boundary, not to keep the human race from pleasure but to protect it from the tyranny of self-indulgence and the scourge of meaninglessness.

Of course, we still fall for the age-old lie that fidelity is restricting, believing that for some reason we are being kept from something wonderful. Again, David—who at times struggled with his own self-indulgent tendencies—provides instruction and encouragement: “No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps. 84:11).


Edenic pleasure was centered in the One who gave Eden as a gift. The relational boundary was the forbidden tree. When the pair chose to sever their relationship with God,

they fled to the bushes, hiding from the One who had given them their deepest satisfaction. Their experiential pleasure was now burdened with shame. The ever-brilliant C. S. Lewis warns us of the danger of lowering our gaze from the Giver to the gift.

“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

ONLY HE CAN SATISFY

In light of this, where is the pleasure in a bit of sizzling gristle in the bottom of a pan, or a deep drink from the murky dregs of a broken cistern? The Infinite One offers us enduring satisfaction. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink,” says Jesus, and he will “never be thirsty” again (John 7:37; 4:14).

The story of Anthony Bourdain is a cautionary tale: ultimately, the pursuit of pleasure, whether exotic or common, with all of its allure, will not satisfy. A quest to taste all the exotic flavors of this world will only leave you hungrier than you were before you began. 

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The Oakwood University Aeolians won three gold medals at the 2018 World Choir Games, held this year in Tshwane, South Africa.

PHOTO: OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY CHOIR WINS AT WORLD CHOIR GAMES

THE AEOLIANS EARN HIGHEST SCORES IN SOUTH AFRICA EVENT.

KENN DIXON, OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY NEWS, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Oakwood University Aeolians achieved the highest scores in two categories to win at the tenth World Choir Games, held this year in Tshwane, South Africa. Competing in the categories of spirituals, contemporary music, and university and college, the Aeolians bested more than 14 other choirs from around the world with the highest score in two of the three categories. The group also won three gold medals, two of which were for championships at the biennial event.

The assortment of choirs invited this year hailed from across Africa and Europe, as well as from

Singapore, Indonesia, Argentina, and the United States.

INTERKULTUR, the official organizer, hosted the world's largest choir competition on the continent of Africa for the first time. In this year's event, which marked the thirtieth year of the games with 11 days of competition, the Aeolians repeated their gold medal wins from the 2012 World Choir Games in Cincinnati, Ohio, United States.

"We are delighted to acknowledge, to the glory of God, the hard work and sacrifice of the Aeolians and their leadership," said Oakwood University president Leslie Pollard. "The Aeolians represent

a treasure for our Seventh-day Adventist Church, the city of Huntsville, the state of Alabama, and our United States of America."

Pollard had words of gratitude for everyone involved in the success of the school choir. "Congratulations to [choir conductor] Jason Ferdinand, our music department, and especially our devoted students who compose this world-renowned group," he said. "Having toured with them in South Africa last week, the message was clear: Oakwood University is all about excellence!"

Oakwood University, a historically Black Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning, offers high-quality Christian education, school leaders pointed out. "[Oakwood] emphasizes academic excellence, promotes the harmonious development of mind, body, and spirit, and prepares leaders in service for God and humanity," they said. ▀



COMPLEX ROBOTIC SURGERY PERFORMED AT SYDNEY ADVENTIST HOSPITAL A complex gynecological operation using the da Vinci robot has been performed with surgeons working side by side. Sydney Adventist Hospital is one of only four hospitals in New South Wales, Australia, to have dual consoles for surgery. Surgeons control the highly advanced robotic technology while seated at separate consoles, sharing control of the instruments, and taking turns as needed.



ADVENTIST CLINIC SERVES MORE THAN 8,500 IN THE PHILIPPINES. A clinic organized in Palawan, the Philippines, served 8,742 patients over three days. The clinic was a joint effort by Adventist World Radio (AWR) and LifeSource International Medical Clinics, a humanitarian service associated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Patients were offered a wide range of free medical services, including access to dental care, medical consultation, minor surgeries, optical services, laboratory tests, a pharmacy, and counseling.



MEN'S RESIDENCE HALL WILL HONOR ADVENTIST WORLD WAR II HERO. Adventist University of France, informally known as Collonges, is building a new residence hall for men. The new building will bear the name of Jean Weidner, an alumnus and a World War II veteran. Weidner, while a student at Adventist University of France during World War II, created the Dutch-Paris network with several of his classmates. At great personal risk, they saved the lives of more than 1,000 people.



CHURCH IN SOUTH AMERICA INVOLVES YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUTREACH. Nearly 100,000 Seventh-day Adventist young people across eight South American nations spent their vacation participating in "Caleb Mission," an initiative that enlists them in community service and mission activities. The volunteers will add their numbers to the 80,000 who already participated in mission outreach in January 2018. Young people enrolling in a Caleb Mission project usually travel to places with no Adventist presence to share messages of hope and Bible-based principles.



FIRST PHASE OF MEDICAL SCHOOL IN RWANDA TO BE COMPLETED BY 2019. The first phase of the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) medical school in Rwanda is expected to be ready by March 2019, regional Adventist leaders have reported. The ratio of doctors to patients across the ECD territory is very low. In Rwanda there is one physician per 15,625 inhabitants. Leaders expect that the new medical program will enable them to better address Africa's health challenges, and support the 10 Seventh-day Adventist mission hospitals and 166 clinics across the ECD territory.



GERMANY HOSTS GLOBAL ADVENTIST YOUTH LEADERS CONGRESS. Hundreds of Adventist youth ministry leaders from around the world recently gathered in Kassel, Germany, for the 2018 Global Youth Leaders Congress. Attendees grappled with the challenges and opportunities of ministering to teens and young adults in various cultural contexts. The leadership congress was organized to empower a generation of Spirit-filled leaders to pass on identity, mission, and leadership to upcoming generations.



LARGEST ADVENTIST COMMUNITY CENTER IN THE MIDDLE EAST OPENS IN EGYPT. A renovated Adventist church in Cairo is now a community center as well, offering a preschool, dental clinic, fitness center, massage room, apartments, a kitchen for healthy cooking lessons, and seven classrooms for wellness lectures and English classes. The Adventist Church has 800 members in Egypt, a country with a population of 100 million.

A silhouette of a person stands on a dark horizon, looking towards a sunset. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon. The person's shadow is cast against the bright light of the setting sun. The text "IT IS" is overlaid in a light blue, sans-serif font on the right side of the image.

IT IS

"And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

"But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

"And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

"This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Acts 10:10-16, KJV).

WRITTEN

*God's
truth is
still truth*

The setting is Joppa, a city in Israel, sometime in the first century shortly after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. Near the rooftop deck of a house about noon on a certain day a huge sheet of billows in the air, mysteriously suspended without visible means of support. On the rooftop, a man named Simon Peter, sits or lies down hungry, and now in a "trance."

Actually, the house belongs to another Simon, not a man who catches fish, but one who tans animal hides.

Other interesting participants in the Simons' rooftop scenario include beasts and birds and creepers of varied sorts of animals, all writhing together in the sheet that hangs—by its four corners—from nothing. Adding to the mystery we hear a voice, repeat and repeat its instructions to Peter: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat" (verse 13).

GOALS OF THE SPEECH

Perhaps the goal of all this exercise is to satiate Peter's hunger (verse 13). After all, the invisible entity three times urges him to kill and eat the beasts in the sheet. Or perhaps it's a test of Peter's orthodoxy (verse 14). Hungry though he is, Peter, remembers hundreds of years of Jewish dietary laws given by God Himself that forbid the eating of these sheeted creatures, and refuses to even think of eating them, thus demonstrating his commitment to Hebrew dietary laws.

There is, of course, a third possibility: teaching respect—for the voice commands Peter not to call anything "common" that God has cleansed (verse 15). The focus of respect may be the animals in the sheet, or God's ethics, or something else that the animals represent.

Our passage includes both mental and physical acts, such as prayer and its cessation, hunger and a test of integrity, mysterious appearance and subsequent disappearance of the animal-laden sheet, a voice



To assist us in sorting out the validity of a call we have the Word of God, the Spirit of prophecy, and the collective wisdom of the representatives of God's people who assemble at appointed times in conference.

commanding to kill and eat, repetition of said command, as well as a reproofing injunction not to call things common when God has cleansed them. Among its more mystifying attitudes, the passage features the urgency of the invisible speaker of the trebled message, and Peter's uncharacteristic hesitation and thoughtfulness.

The next time we hear of this event is in verse 28 of the same chapter.^e There we see Peter talking with Cornelius, a centurion from Cæsarea. Cornelius is not an Israelite. According to the laws of the nation at that time, as Peter explains them, no law-abiding Israelite should have entered into his house. Peter states clearly, however, "God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean."

And he verifies this unambiguous understanding again in verse 34: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality." He repeats the concept yet again after rehearsing the rooftop scene to the apostles and believers in Jerusalem when they call him to account for his actions. Not only do they not refute his reasoning, but without debate or demur they glorify God for His mercy in extending salvation to the Gentiles. Perhaps they are reminded of words written by Malachi hundreds of years earlier, after he heard them spoken by God, who also said *I do not change*: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles" (Mal. 1:11, KJV).

ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECH

The initial speech that prompted this amazingly perceptive understanding by Peter demands analysis, especially since Peter does not act on the surface meaning of the apparently explicit words. In fact, the words seem so transparently obvious that even today many Christians say they mean we can eat anything.

The directive from the invisible Being holding the sheet full of animals was completely relevant—Peter *was* hungry—and was also apparently perfectly clear and unambiguous. What then could account for Peter's reluctance to act on a direct call from his Lord? This was, after all, the man who had a history of leaping headlong where angels feared to tread. Why, now that he had matured from a fractious sheep to a shepherd, did he see fit to question the very words spoken, as it were,

from God's mouth to his ear? Why didn't he decide that he, as an apparently gifted person who had just witnessed Dorcas spring to life in connection with his prayer, should be the logical one to initiate a less socially annoying way of eating for Christians who were branching out into new cultures?

Peter had spent a good deal of time walking with Jesus, more than almost anyone else, and listening to Him speak. Surely he recognized Jesus' voice instantly—yet Peter did not obey what appeared to be the Lord's call to kill and eat. The only immediate action he took, we are told in verses 17 and 19, was worry—perplexity and reflection as to the meaning of the vision. What made him stop and think?

IT IS WRITTEN

Perhaps the answer lies in other words Jesus had spoken even before Peter met Him. Back when He was just beginning His public ministry on earth, when He was staggering about in the wilderness, exhausted, hungry to the point of starvation, and horribly alone; at His weakest point Satan approached Jesus with three reasonable-sounding offers: one for food, one for power, and one for a chance to spectacularly demonstrate God's saving grace.

Jesus' three answers modeled for Christians of all ages the only safe recourse when one's emotions are moved by calls to apparently logical action. "*It is written*," meekly stated the gracious One whose constant care nurtures the growth of every living plant that becomes our human food. "*It is written*," humbly replied the King of kings, who constructed not only the planet on which earthly kings set their tottering thrones, but whole solar systems and universes. "*It is written*," firmly answered the Savior, whose strong arm keeps hold of all who cry out to Him, not necessarily to prevent them from falling upon earthly stones, but to keep them standing upon the eternal Rock. "*It is written*."

"It is written," said the great Reformer Martin Luther some hundreds of years later when the powers of church and state amassed themselves to grind him and what he stood for into dust. It seemed to be the worst of all possible moments for newly reformed Christianity, but it was not so. The lowest point for the Reformation was not when this one man stood before glittering wealth

and capricious rulership, forcing all to listen to the plain truths of Jesus. Luther met those powers head-on, prevailing through Jesus Christ.

No, the most dangerous time for the Reformation was later, when people within the ranks of the Reformers in Germany, those of great piety and leadership skills, individuals who believed in the Word of God, heeded the call from a voice that told them *they* were now divinely commissioned to complete the Reformation. These men were convicted that they were called to a more effective use of their interests and abilities for God, and that Luther's old-fashioned habit of speaking nothing but Bible truth was no longer desirable.

In acting upon this conviction, however, they reproached the cause of God. Blood flowed, truth was misrepresented, and God's enemies rejoiced. These deluded people had used their own feelings and impressions as their standard because they had forgotten to compare seductive new words with the Word of God. They had forgotten that "*It is written*" is the only safe recourse for Christians.

Now, when human wisdom dictates that we trust ourselves, discover power within us, develop our fullest potential regardless of the needs of others, raise our individual consciousness, be *affirmed*—what should *we* do when we hear voices calling?

One voice may be God's own call, as in the case of Peter, to be prayerfully debated and compared with God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit so that consistent interpretations emerge. Another voice, enormously compelling and deceptively disguised, may be from Satan himself, as in the case of Luther's compatriots, to be prayerfully resisted in the power of the Holy Spirit.

To assist us in sorting out the validity of a call we have the Word of God, the Spirit of prophecy, and the collective wisdom of God's people who assemble at appointed times in conference. In these days of increasing knowledge with much rushing to and fro, may we be known as Christians who, when faced with seductive, angry, or confusing calls that conflate unchanging Christian duty with changing cultural standards, prayerfully say, "*It is written*." ❖

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The Source of life to the universe guarantees a share in His immortality to “everyone who believes.”

IN AND OUT OF TRAGEDY

No, death is not the end

LAEL CAESAR

You’ll never make it out alive!”—words of the brigand who has cornered your heroes in more movies than you can count. With his cliché he means for the spirit of your hero to crumble as he emerges, hands held high, in feeble and humiliating surrender.

ESCAPE FROM DEATH?

Innumerable skeptics employ that bandit’s cliché to describe the destiny of human mortality. For them, our destiny is nothing but a dead-end street called death. For millions of moral others death is a state of torment or trial in which the evil they have done in this life is somehow purified before they return to life promoted to some better and higher state.

HOW DID WE GET IN?

But the matter of getting out alive, of escaping the tragedy of death, is not a logical first question. The obvious precedent to the question of how we get out is the question of how we first got in. Before we consider how we escape someone may reasonably inquire, “How did you get trapped?”

The Bible’s escape plan is most reliable because the Bible knows, confronts, and answers the first question exhaustively. Why do we die? We die because of sin: “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Sin causes death, and everybody sins (Rom. 3:23). Before sin nobody faced death. Without sin nobody would ever have tasted death. Death became our problem because we became involved with its toxic

cause: “The sting of death is sin” (1 Cor. 15:56).

And we are not innocent sufferers: we chose that cause against the best of counsel. Right at the bliss-filled beginning of life our Creator God designed an exquisite garden home for our first parent “and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Gen 2:15). He gave him clear instructions as to how to proceed safely in the program called living: “The Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die’” (verses 16, 17).

But the man and his wife elected to violate that instruction: first she came to believe that the fruit forbidden “was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom” (Gen. 3:6). It was a thorough distortion, a remarkable inversion that she came to believe, one that was diametrically contrary to fact and truth. Continuing the perversity, “she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (verse 6). And as Moses states about God—“not human, that he should lie” (Num. 23:19)—so the man and woman found it to be. His warning word was cosmic truth, and death has followed and hounded and blighted humanity and all our earth ever since.

HOW SHALL WE GET OUT?

In the book of Job, one man plaintively asks the second question: “If someone dies, will they live again?” (Job 14:14). Otherwise stated: will anybody ever get out?

Multiple world philosophies answer Job and their own soul with a blank stare, or with fantastic and interminable scenarios of going and coming again and again in one form and yet another. But the God of the life gift and of the good counsel defied also gives an answer to the tragedy that followed disregard for His warning. His answer is for the plaintive questioner, for the hopeless philosopher, for Adam and Eve and for all their descendants. Jesus speaks to us all announcing: “I am the

resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" (John 11:25).

Through millennia of joyful and sorrowful human living men and women have found encouragement in God's promises of life beyond death. Job, our plaintive crier, raised the question we referenced on life after death in context of horrible personal disaster—the sudden loss of his vast properties, the death of his children, the physical affliction and emotional shame of puss—oozing sores all over his body, the brokenness of spirit it all causes for his life companion, the denunciation of his friends (Job 1; 2; 4:12-21; 8:4; 11:6, etc.).

Because of Job's circumstances, his expression of hope strikes the hearer as a dizzying and miraculous inspiration. Out of deep darkness and despair Job looks with faith's eye and sees an end beyond the end of his life in Uz, an end that is the end of all of the cycles of human birthing and burying on earth. Your ear of faith may bring to you the sound of his astonishing words recorded in Job 19:25-27: "I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

More than 1,500 years after Job, Jesus Himself vindicated Job's faith when He destroyed the prison gates of death and hell, and demonstrated His authority as Son of God "by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Because He did we and Job are guaranteed new life beyond the grave. As Jesus put it: "Because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

This promise, this Christian hope of flawless eternal living, burns brightly in millions of hearts as we live in the midst of death and disaster, holding still to faith in Jesus' return to take us to Himself, even if we must first taste death. Those ancient men of faith and women of courage immortalized in the book of Hebrews' pantheon of spiritual heroes lived long ago looking for a city made by God Himself (Heb. 11:10). The day is coming soon when their faith shall be palpably confirmed as they are gifted

physical immortality in the form of bodies no longer subject to corruption of any sort (1 Cor. 15:53, 54).

MEANWHILE


Meanwhile, as the Bible explains, they sleep. "Sleeping" is the biblical description of death (Job 7:21; Dan. 12:2; John 5:29; 11:11-14; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). The metaphor clarifies the mental and physical condition of the dead as one of total unconsciousness, without any of the pain or glory often claimed: "All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return" (Eccl. 3:20), whether they lived lives of selfless blessing to all, or lives of self-centered exploitation and greed. All who die sleep until Jesus returns in fulfillment of His Word: "I will come back and take you to be with me" (John 14:3). He, the Source of life to the universe, guarantees a share in His immortality to "everyone who believes" (John 3:15).

It is history's unparalleled offer, exchanging the doom of oblivion in the grave at the end of life and time on earth for the glory of endless joy in the company of our sisters and brothers of all races and times, "from east and west and north and south" (Luke 13:29). What a day, and season, and time, and eternity of feasting and celebration and joy in the Lord whose sacrifice makes it possible.

Jesus our Lord laid down His life, took it up again, and steadfastly affirms: "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18).

The season of human life and death on this earth is drawing to its drama-packed close, letting in the day when God makes all things new. In its closing hours the greed of the greedy and the frustrations of the wretched poor combine with unprecedented horrors in the natural world as the whole creation—earth and beast and human—twists and retches, "groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" (Rom. 8:22).

Paul's predictions on the outrageousness of human selfishness in the last days are fulfilled with



The season of human life and death on this earth is drawing to its drama-packed close.

almost exaggerated accuracy (2 Tim. 3:1-5). In the political, economic, literary and entertainment world dramatic events portend: miracle-working “demonic spirits,” unseen but surely felt, some of the very ones who have masqueraded in the past as the conscious, communicating “soul” of some dead person—King Saul or your departed grandma (see 1 Sam. 28:7-19; 1 Chron. 10:13, 14)—now hasten “the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14). This is the battle of Armageddon—not a conflict of human armies engaged against each other, but the united forces of spiritual deception engaged against the King of righteousness and Lord of glory.

The King and Lord is called Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11) because He is: faithfully obedient unto death on a criminal’s cross (Phil. 2:8), an act of pure love that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) on the simple condition that we acknowledge and surrender our guilt and doom to Him in exchange for life and joy forever (John 3:16, 17). This incomparable exchange is but one more unfathomable aspect of the humanly irrational fairness of divine grace that shows God “to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). “With justice he judges and wages war” (Rev. 19:11); His pervasive justice conquers all in the campaign of light against gloom, joy against fear, good against malice, and life against the oblivion of death.

RELEVANT, PERTINENT MESSAGE

Seventh-day Adventists have a message of hope for a world in need of hope. Our name is an anchor that inspires a future: by honoring the monument of seventh day rest that He established from the beginning we celebrate our confidence in the God of Genesis Creation. And our confidence that He is our unchangingly dependable and gracious Lord (Mal. 3:6), “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8) gives us unbeatable assurance in His word for tomorrow: “I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3).

It is our honor to share through our art and social media and music and life the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 that clearly outline God’s love for humanity and His plan of salvation for men and women today. It is duty and joy to sound heaven’s call to God’s people to come out of Babylon’s confusion into the peace of those who love God’s law so that “nothing can make them stumble” (Ps. 119:165).

Instead of Jesus’ counsel, “Lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28), the adversary-in-chief would have us absorbed by intelligent and artistic depictions of superheroes, products of the genius of fallen human imagination, through which he may tell and retell his first grand lie from Eden to century 21: “You will not certainly die” (Gen 3:4). By this lie, and lesser ones he keeps inventing, he sustains the darkness where the masses hope and grope at straws that can save none, whether him or them from drowning in eternal oblivion.

But Jesus’ warning will keep God’s children safe in the hour of Satan’s supreme misleading effort, “the strong, almost overmastering delusion”^{*} that he is the Christ who has returned to free the world from death’s curse forever by taking God’s children home.

In this issue of *Adventist Review* as we address the question of how to deal with the tragedy of death, we say welcome to the answer that Jesus holds out: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me” (John 14:1). Welcome to His promise of return to raise His sleeping saints, as well as to translate those who are alive at His coming. All of us have been touched by death in one way or another. All of us may revel together in Jesus’ guarantee that death itself is soon to end. Let’s share this good news as Paul intended, and “encourage one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18).

^{*}Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 624.

Lael Caesar shares his thrill at the hope of the resurrection—and other God-blessed things—as an associate editor of *Adventist Review*.

WHEN THE TIME COMES

Death is ever with us—but only for now.

SETH PIERCE

Have you ever had the misfortune of being comforted by someone who really doesn't know what to say? While they mean well, they sometimes lack the words to speak in situations of grief and fear.

Perhaps the greatest example from Scripture is Job's friends. After losing his children, his livelihood, his health, and his wife's support ("Curse God and die!" Thanks, honey) his buddies show up and make things worse.

When Job's friends arrived, Scripture says they

didn't even recognize their friend. "When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads. Then they sat on the ground with him seven days and seven nights. No one said a word to him, because they saw how great his suffering was" (Job 2:12, 13).

The story would have been much better if they had just stayed that way. But we can take only so much quiet pain, so we must fill the silence; and we often fill it with nonsense.





“Our doctrine of death is the most comprehensive, compassionate, gentle, and comforting of all theologies.”

DEATH AT A DISTANCE

Facing down death with a loved one (whether theirs or someone they have recently lost) is not easy in a culture that medicates and distracts from every type of imaginable discomfort.

The church, once a place that performed all the necessary steps for preparing someone to die, seems at times to have contracted that out to hospital chaplains, mortuaries, and funeral homes. This isn't to disparage those wonderful services, but to note that believers—at least those in the West—may not be as familiar with the spiritual nuances of death as we once were. In America some now embrace a Huxleyan “Christianity without tears.”¹

Out of our discomfort we speak, even though we don't know what to say. At times we resort to theologizing. Adventists are particularly passionate about the state of humanity in death/the nonimmortality of the soul. People who express their fear of death or grief through theologically suspect statements produce a kind of allergic reaction where we swiftly lead the frightened person to Fundamental Belief 26.

But this potentially ill-timed straightforward approach, despite its propositional truthfulness, may result in the same rebuke God gave: “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2). Most of the time silence, presence, and prayer are best when ministering by the side of someone's hospital bed.

Yet Ellen White wrote: “True religion is intensely practical.”² If what we believe is true, shouldn't there be some application? The Bible itself suggests that all its contents are “useful” (see 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Is there some kind of pastoral approach to the state of the dead that can help those who fear death face it in faith?

HOPE BEYOND DEATH

One of my colleagues who works in a hospital setting told me, “Our doctrine of death is the most comprehensive, compassionate, gentle, and comforting of all theologies.” So I offer a few possible

ways to share this truth in a way that brings life to the dying.

English (along with many other languages) is structured around metaphors that help us frame reality. Throughout the Bible the metaphor of sleep is used for death (see John 11:11-13, etc.). Instead of eternal torment, or a lifetime of watching from heaven as loved ones suffer through their lifetimes, we await our awakening to eternal life with Jesus.

This conditional immortality reflects God's loving and merciful character. When we die, we rest in the hands of a loving Creator who promises to call us when it is time to wake up. Of course, that could be a short time or a long time. To prevent the nightmares of worry, loneliness, and powerlessness at not being able to help those still alive, the Bible tells us “the dead know nothing” (Eccl. 9:5). Death is a dreamless sleep that will feel like a “twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52). Our movement from death to eternal life will be nearly imperceptible to us. God will watch over earth during the time that passes in between. The negative, fearful, and painful feelings will no longer be a part of our experience—forever.

Finally, those who die first receive new life first. Scripture says at world's end, “The Lord himself will come down from heaven . . . and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Not a bad way to wake up.

So it's OK to let go when the time comes. Just as Jesus promised to remember the dying thief on the cross next to Him, He will remember us, too. And the next thing we know will be life in paradise. ♣

¹ Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), p. 238.

² Ellen G. White, “An Appeal for Unselfish Effort,” *Review and Herald*, Dec. 9, 1902.

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DEATH AND THE GOSPEL

Faith, not fear, is the basis of our beliefs

DANIEL MATTEO

In the late 1970s my parents were engaged to be married. My father was studying the Bible with my mother's pastor, Graeme Christian.

Dad loved every minute of it. One day they studied the subject of *what really happens when a person dies*.

DAD'S HAUNTED HOUSE


Dad thought he already knew something about this subject, but he was holding some contradictory ideas in tension. He lived in a "haunted

house": he felt that it was possible for the spirits of the dead to return to either harass or help the living. He also believed that people are reborn into new bodies when they die (reincarnation).

In his Roman Catholic upbringing he had heard that people go straight to heaven, hell, or purgatory at the moment of death. Dad knew that not all these ideas could be true, so he was interested in finding out the truth. What he saw in Scripture was very different from anything he could have thought or even imagined.



PHOTO BY BEN WHITE ON UNSPLASH



**Because of his death and resurrection,
I know that I am saved and can joyfully
anticipate His soon return.**

LIGHT FOR DAD'S MIND

"[T]he living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun" (Eccl. 9:5, 6). "As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return. He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more" (Job 7:9, 10).

Dad learned that Jesus Himself referred to death as being an unconscious "sleep" (John 11:13), from which He intended to wake His people and take them to be with Him "when He comes" (1 Cor. 15:23, cf. John 14:1-3), not as soon as they die (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). He learned that the dead do not return to haunt their houses, and that the "ghosts" in his home were actually evil angels, for "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). He learned that "people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgement" (Heb. 9:27).

The difference and blessing that the understanding of this truth made in our family while I was growing up is something that I am now only beginning to grasp. Popular media such as books, films, music, and video games are replete with spiritualism and supernatural themes. The subjects of death, ghosts, spirits, demons, and the supernatural are expounded on ad nauseam through TV and computer screens.

The enemy's purpose is for us to develop unbiblical ideas about the spirit world, and so allow channels through which to deceive us. When we spend 10 to 20 hours a week on screens consuming popular media, and only one hour a week at worship, whose ideas are likely to be victorious in the battle for our minds?

LIGHT FOR US ALL

When we children had questions about the afterlife, or ghosts or spirits on TV, my parents always encouraged us not to be afraid, explaining the biblical truth on the subject. What's more, they always pointed us to turn to Jesus in prayer for protection when we were afraid, and, crucially, encouraged us not to watch or read things filled with untruths and errors.

I remember friends at high school being scared because they watched some horror movie, or because they had experienced some haunting, supernatural manifestation. This is even more common today. I always knew that Jesus, who "is the head over every power and authority" (Col. 2:10), was on my side.

What this teaching means to me can be summed up in these words: "And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). Because of His death and resurrection, I know that I am saved and that I can joyfully anticipate His soon return.

Jesus' victory over death is complete and eternal. He said, "I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18). His resurrection is a down payment to guarantee that "because I live, you also will live" (John 14:19).

One more thing you should know: I was named after the prophet Daniel. For that reason, I hold these words, which Gabriel spoke to the prophet Daniel, close to my heart: "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance" (Dan. 12:13).

I plan to be there when the sleeping saints arise to be with Jesus. Do you? 📌

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THE SUN WILL SHINE AGAIN

Death is not the end

RICHARD MARTIN

My heart pounded as I prepared to deliver the most difficult eulogy of my ministry. Tears fell as I reflected on the young woman's life that hundreds had gathered to remember and celebrate. My tears did not fall alone. Sobs, sighs, and sounds of sorrow accented the atmosphere all around.

DEATH THE INESCAPABLE

Her former classmates, coworkers, childhood friends, cousins, aunts, uncles, parents, and grandparents all wore shades of purple, not because this was my cousin's favorite color, but rather because her life was prematurely taken—in an incident of domestic violence.

Death is a ubiquitous thread in the interconnected web of human experience (see Eccl. 2:16). Families cannot avoid its venomous sting. Schools suffer from its pale shadow. Neighborhoods feel its gusty blow. Churches wrestle with its unsolicited frequency. Regardless of age, gender, language, or nationality, death is an equal opportunity invader. The poor cannot avoid it, and the rich cannot delay it. The tall cannot step over it, and the short cannot sneak under it. The young cannot outrun it, and the old cannot outwit it. Men cannot strong-arm it, and women cannot sweet-talk it. Death is no respecter of persons, unbiased in the relentless pursuit of its next victim.

Is there a consoling message that can reach the aching heart of the wife who weeps into her late husband's pillow? Where does the young child turn after his mother succumbs to the relentless aggression of cancer? How does the couple cope with the pastel colors of a nursery empty because of miscarriage? How does the pastor remind the

church, reeling from the loss of yet another disciple, that the sun will shine again?

DEATH AND CONSOLATION

As a pastor I serve the broken, offering a ministry of presence, listening empathetically, and sincerely interceding during seasons of grief. I highlight God's character of love by presenting God as a comforter (John 14:16, 18). God does not delight in death. He hates death. When we lose a loved one, God does not deny, discredit, or demean our feelings. He does not demand a quick sojourn around the grief cycle, hastily transitioning from shock and denial to stability and acceptance. God comforts. His comfort embraces the fullness of our grappling with the aftermath of death. He sympathizes with every question, comment, and concern. He feels what we feel, for God has not excused Himself from the personal sting of death. Remember, He sent His one and only Son to live and to *die* (see John 3:16).

Consider Scripture's testimony on the God who has comforted many a sufferer in times past. Listen to the words of one of those sufferers: "When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul" (Ps. 94:19, ESV).¹ For You, O God are "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1, KJV). And in words directed to others for their encouragement, the psalmist could also testify, "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into His ears" (Ps. 18:6, KJV).

Paul's words are both relevant and opportune: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation,



**Yes! The sun will shine again,
and what a bright day that will be.**

that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3, 4, KJV).

Moreover, God's love is revealed not only in His present comfort but also in the future fulfillment of His promised return. The second coming of Jesus Christ is perhaps the greatest expression of God's comfort, and the ultimate resolution to the death problem. Such was the conviction that led Paul to encourage the saints of ancient Thessalonica: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13, KJV). Jesus is coming back to get us all, awake or asleep in Him: "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (verses 16-18, KJV).

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death," Paul assures (1 Cor. 15:26, KJV). That will be the day! The day "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality" and "death is swallowed up in victory" (verse 54, KJV). God is faithful and will fulfill His promise, burying death eternally.

DEATH AND BROKENNESS . . . AND PUZZLES

Once, while visiting a member whose husband had died unexpectedly, I noticed hundreds of puzzle pieces scattered across her kitchen table. In a way, they mirrored the pieces of her broken heart. She sat on the other end of the table, a few feet away from the very spot where she had found her husband of 28 years collapsed on the kitchen floor. Countless questions raced around her mind. One or two escaped her lips.

My elder and I listened to her reflections while our wives undertook the unfinished puzzle. Piece

by piece they covered more and more of the table. Their progress alternated between stints of rapid placement and stretches of slow discovery. They proceeded patiently. They finished two nights later, using a picture of the completed puzzle as their guide. The best way to complete a puzzle is to consult the finished picture.

Death often leaves our lives broken up into a million pieces. But God knows what to do with every one of those broken, tear-stained pieces. It often takes time. But in the end God will restore, as He disclosed to His beloved John, who heard "a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. . . . He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true'" (Rev. 21:3-5).

Although the dark clouds of grief sometimes gather, blocking rays of hope and casting shadows of despair, the sun will shine again. Though our hearts ache from the piercing sting of separation, the sun will shine again. "We have this hope that burns within our hearts, hope in the coming of the Lord."² One day God's radiant glory will melt death's icy grip. One day the mist of mourning will be permanently dispelled. One day the shadow of the grave will cast its gloomy hue no more. One day the clouds will roll back, the trumpet will blast, the voice of the archangel will sound, and the dead in Christ will rise. The Comforter will welcome the redeemed to their long-anticipated home. Yes! The sun will shine again, and what a bright day that will be. ♣

¹ Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² "We Have This Hope," *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), no. 214.

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GOD HAS THE ANSWERS

He knows what our questions are.

ADRIENNE BENTON

The first family loss to which I ever ministered was for a couple whose child had suddenly died in the womb one month before the due date.

DEATH AS EMPTINESS

The family was devastated. This little girl would have been their firstborn. Her room was already decorated, two baby showers had taken place, thank you cards for the gifts had been mailed, and the outfit she was going to wear home was waiting for her.

On that fateful day, her parents screamed at God and cried and cried and cried. They had more questions than there were answers. They experienced a depth of sorrow they had previously only heard others talk about.

As their chaplain I asked God to minister through me. I had no words, no encouragement, no comfort that I could offer that would ease their broken hearts. I felt as empty as they did.

But though I had no words, God did. Questions spun round and round in those young parents' heads: Why? How could a loving God allow such a tragedy to take place? Was the child's death a sign that they were being punished by God? What happens when you die? For every loved one I help memorialize, the same questions come up.

DEATH AS TRAGIC CONSEQUENCE

When God created this world, he never intended for us to die or experience sorrow and sadness. But when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, thus bringing sin into this world, they saw the truth of God's warning word: "You will certainly die" (Gen.

2:17). And today it's as true as then in the Garden, that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). What is also true is that because of God's grace "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

This earth and time of human failure with its dreadful consequence of death will not rage on forever. The psalmist testifies: "you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high" (Ps. 3:3). God is the only one who can provide us with peace, bring real hope in the midst of heartache and pain, disrupting the harsh inevitability of sinful act or state and tragic mortal consequence. The death of our loved ones is not the punishment of a spiteful God. Indeed, He Himself promises to be with us through it all (see Matt. 28:20). We may let him wipe our tears, fill the holes in our hearts, and satisfy our loneliness with His precious, sacred company. While suffering and death are natural results of sin, we can take comfort in knowing that death is not the end.

DEATH AS DIVINE KINDNESS

When death stages armed invasions into our homes to rob us of our loved ones, we may be assured that those we lose, even those who may have lived selfish, ungodly lives, have passed to quiet, undisturbed rest in the moment of their death. They are not condemned to constant and restless roving over the earth as sometimes taught: "Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun" (Eccl. 9:6).

Death is nothing but quiet, oblivious, total rest.



Though I had no words,
I knew that God did.

The deceased are not walking around grieving for our losses or thrilling at our gains. Nor can they communicate with us. The spirits that impersonate them to intrigue, deceive, and enslave people “are demonic spirits that perform signs” (Rev. 16:14).

In His wisdom, God permits the dead to lie in peaceful unconsciousness, waiting for resurrection: first comes the resurrection unto life eternal (see 1 Thess. 4:16; John 5:29); then follows the resurrection to judgment for the rest: “those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:29; see also Rev. 20:6). Only God knows the true state of each individual heart. So that each one’s final verdict for eternity depends upon our compassionate and empathetic God who does not desire “anyone to perish, but that everyone” should be able to share with Him in His glorious eternity (2 Peter 3:9).

DEATH AS THE END OF DEATH

Death is unkind and pungent. It hurts and it stinks. The stench is smelt for days, for years, for lifetimes, even for generations; and for generations of those robbed by crime or accident of some considerable ancestral legacy. The narratives survive and haunt and grieve.

But death will not have the final say. Soon God will allow us to inhale the fragrance of victory over death, sorrow, and the grave, for death is an enemy destined for death: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26; see also Rev. 20:14). At the end, and for the saints who endure to the end of it all, “There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4). There will only be the victory of endless life in Jesus to celebrate forever!

DEATH AS PRELUDE TO ETERNAL LIFE

God, the source of life across the universe, has promised humanity that those who die in Christ

will live again. He Himself “will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). For all who die with this faith, He is coming back to break their grave and casket open, awaken them, and bless them with the gift of immortal bodies.

Then those believers who are still alive will be “caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17).

These words give hope and peace. They say that after death comes life. In that sense, those who now live in Christ are barely experiencing our wonderful first installment on everlasting living. We shall collect the full amount when He comes again, as He has promised: “Do not let your hearts be troubled . . . I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:1, 3); “My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done” (Rev. 22:12).

Life is a promise, fulfill it. Life is a sorrow, overcome it. Life is a song, sing it. Life is a struggle, accept it. Life is a tragedy, confront it. Life is an adventure, dare it. Life is precious, do not destroy it. Life is life, fight for it! “Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Ps. 30:5).

While we remember our loved ones, keep on living. Live with integrity, live with joy, live with compassion, live with faith; enjoy the sunrise, walk barefoot more, laugh today, and cause someone else to smile tomorrow. Live in Christ. Live the life He blesses you to live in the midst of pain. He uses our lives in Him to testify to others how wonderful life can be.

We live today to live again for eternity. ♣

Lieutenant Commander Adrienne Benton serves as a chaplain in the United States Navy. In 2008 she became the first Seventh-day Adventist woman to be commissioned as a Navy chaplain.

ADVENTIST
REVIEW
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THE BATTLE FOR LIGHT

*An experience from
the creative world
of art and media*

BY GISELLE SARLI HASEL



“Woe to those . . . who put darkness for light” (Isa. 5:20).

If it isn't dark, it isn't fun": words of our professor to a class of graduate students at a leading school of art and design; words that reflect current trends within the creative world of art, media and literature. In a generation raised on *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, and *Twilight*, the media world has become very much as that professor saw it. Today's secularity means that belief in God has been eclipsed by a fascination for the dark side. Science fiction and dark fantasy are now top-selling genres. Of the top 50 all-time highest grossing movies, 35, or nearly 70 percent, fit within those categories.¹ They include the titles mentioned above as well as *Avatar* and *The Lion King*.

What do these films have in common? A belief in the circle or cycle of life, in the immortality of the soul, deep magic (in *Star Wars* expressed as The Force), and the message that salvation arises from the extraterrestrial and fantastical. The recent, high-grossing film *The Black Panther* connects both the hero and the villain with ancestor worship, a trance-like communication with the dead, and a resulting possession of supernatural power. And the world is eating it up as delectable gourmet entertainment.

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In class my professor showed a love for and advocated for dark fun. She blamed Christianity for the witch hunts it sponsored, the innocent dying during the Crusades, and other atrocities and wars caused by the Christian faith. Early enough in the semester it became apparent that she had a personal interest in spiritualism. The themes chosen for our art projects were always dark. Her favorite artists and art expressed Gothic images of death and

blood mixed with innocent looking dolls. After observing her watching African voodoo worship and shamans exorcising on YouTube, I was not sure what to think, or how to deal with the dark assignments she handed out.

Our confrontations began early, and deep within I bore the sinking feeling that something more than just art was going on in the classroom. Her professorial posture of "art director" gave her license to publicly rip to pieces anyone's initial ideas and sketches if she didn't like them. No clear explanation of what she wanted accompanied these public indignations of hers. My sketches continued to be rejected, and I must have been one of the last students to get approval. It felt like a test that put me under intense pressure. After class I often cried because of her terrible reviews and humiliation. Because of the strain I sincerely longed for the semester to be over.

WITNESS

Every day after classes I went to my apartment and prayed, asking God to use me as He saw fit. I asked Him to allow me to be a witness to anyone He desired me to reach. She was the last person I expected God would send me to, but that is exactly what He did.

One day after the semester was over I was surprised to see my professor standing in front of my apartment complex. She was excited about something: her house had just sold, just before her retirement at the end of the year, and she would be temporarily moving into my complex. She had noticed that I exercised in the apartment gym. "Can we be exercise partners together? That would be so much fun!" she exclaimed. I reluctantly agreed but was not sure what to say during our

I prayed, “God give me the right words to speak.”

time together. I prayed, “God give me the right words to speak.”

During our first walk in the nearby city park, she discovered that I was Seventh-day Adventist. She was indignant: “How could you believe in a God that justified the Crusades?”

“That is not God,” I replied with a kind smile, “That is what man made God out to be.”

The next time we met she had done her homework online. “So as a Seventh-day Adventist you believe in creation? How is that possible in our scientific age?”

“Evolutionism has as many questions as creationism.” I responded. “Where does life originate from? There are many questions science cannot answer.”

Each time we walked, I felt God helping me with answers, many of which she could agree with and even relate to. Despite our different backgrounds, we talked freely about everything: religion, politics, personal family issues. Our differences made our conversation honest and meaningful. We truly enjoyed each other’s company. A couple times we missed our walks and she confessed that without them she would “go into a funk.” When the academic year ended it was time to say “goodbye.” We had become friends. She gave me a long hug, and looked at me with tears in her eyes: “Giselle, thank you for everything. You are a good ambassador for Christianity.”

REFLECTIONS

Why the increase of spiritualism and science fiction in movies, literature, and art? I see it as humanity’s desperate effort to fill the void that modernism created when deconstructing the supernatural, and specifically by seeking to explain away the Judeo-Christian faith. We all long for a reality outside of our natural, finite world. We know that “life does not consist in an

abundance of possessions” (Luke 12:15). Rather, life is fundamentally spiritual. Humans everywhere sense this because God has placed “eternity in the human heart” (Eccl. 3:11).

But that sense of a reality far beyond our material goods is vigorously exploited by the enemy of love and life, the agent of deception and destruction. For Walt Disney Studios it is exploitation for financial success: one of my colleagues who worked as an art director for Walt Disney, always gets asked the question about spiritualism in their productions, and regularly responds, “Walt Disney is a business; they do not incorporate spiritualism with any intentional ‘hidden purpose,’ but simply because spiritualism *sells*.”

No doubt in Brazil, my native land, spiritualism may also have its economic benefits. But the phenomenon is so rampant that for many Brazilians it’s a given; many people there are intentionally involved with satanic spirits. Their passion gives evidence of humanity’s spiritual vacuum, as well as of the Great Controversy raging around us.

Seventh-day Adventists must answer the world’s need for hope with a message of hope. The three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 clearly outline God’s plan of salvation and His love for humanity, the very message needed for these final moments of earth’s history. Those messages call people out of Babylon, out of the confusion of false hope, false worship, and misguided allegiance to fantastical powers, to the gift of eternal life in Jesus now (see 1 John 5:13), and the opportunity to meet Him in peace at His soon return (see John 14:1-3).

The adversary would have us look to superheroes, to gods from the wider universe, and to the age-old deception spoken by the serpent years ago, “You will not surely die” (Gen 3:4) as he prepares the masses for his own final deception. But Christ our Lord has already come to Earth “To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79). Following His light and His way of peace will bring us to a thoroughly different destination than would many of the visions that dominate our entertainment screens today. ▀

¹ Cited from BoxOfficeMojo <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/> Accessed July 6, 2018.

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THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH

In my early 20s (21, to be exact) it hit me that truth, absolute truth, had to exist. I mean—I existed, the sky existed, the universe existed, the ground existed. Whatever it all was—it *all was*, which meant that something had to explain *why it all was*, and that explanation, whatever it was, would be the Truth.

Now, I don't want to use the word "sacred," because it would imply some kind of religious component that, at least in my mind then, wasn't there. But once I realized that truth, as in the Truth, had to exist, I felt this moral (as opposed to sacred) obligation to try to find it. I have no idea why I felt this way (so strongly, too), other than something like *Truth for truth's sake*.

I wasn't seeking hope, love, eternal life, God, divine peace, or celestial harmony, whatever. Rather, I was in a cold, rational pursuit of cold, rational truth—good, bad, hopeful, hopeless, whatever it was.

Maybe the Truth is that we were computer algorithms created by a race of aliens with powerful Macs? Maybe we're the chance products of a cold and mindless creation that never saw us coming and cares nothing about us? Maybe a god or gods created the universe for the fun of watching humanity suffer and die? Maybe reality is someone's or something's dream that will vanish once whoever or whatever wakes up?

I didn't care. All I knew was that I wanted the Truth—even if it meant hating it.

Well, lo and behold, not only did I find the Truth (or rather, He, Jesus, "the truth"

[John 14:6], found me), but *Man!* did it turned out to be wonderful beyond my wildest imagination. The Creator of the universe (John 1:1-3), the explanation of *why it all was*, loved this world so much that in the person of His Son, Jesus, He took upon Himself our humanity and at the cross bore in Himself the just punishment for the evil, sin, and outright raunchiness that each one of us has committed. And He did it so that each one of us can claim the promise of eternal life in a whole new heavens and earth.

How much better could the Truth be?

Scripture doesn't talk much about *seeking* truth, an idea that seems more from Athens than Jerusalem. Instead, Paul wrote about those who will perish because they "refused to love the truth and so be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10).

The *love* of the truth. Truth, and the love of it—this is something we receive, something we are given, if we accept it.

Look at the Truth, Truth we can know only because it has been revealed to us. Christ crucified, our Creator becoming our Redeemer, the one who upholds "all things by his powerful word" (Heb. 1:3), allowing Himself to be nailed to a cross in order to give us a new existence in a new creation.

Having received the Truth, how then could we not love it? ♣

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CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



TRUTH, AND THE
LOVE OF IT—THIS
IS SOMETHING
WE RECEIVE,
SOMETHING WE ARE
GIVEN, IF WE
ACCEPT IT.



PHOTO BY JOSHUA EARLE ON UNSPLASH

THE SIN OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

The same pattern becomes evident in the fall of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 2 we witness a perfect creation. Ellen White describes it: “As man came forth from the hand of his Creator, he was of lofty stature and perfect symmetry.”¹ Even in character, Adam bore the image of God with a mind capable of understanding divine things.

Yet in Genesis 3 humanity succumbs to the serpent’s insinuations that God has withheld something from it. It begins to believe in its intrinsic immortality. With this new perception humanity’s first act is to seize upon the illusion of control. Whereas heretofore God has provided every need, including life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), now humanity attempts to supply its own need in the form of fig leaves and a belief that it will not surely die.

Today 84 percent of people in the world engage in religion, almost all of whom have some belief in an afterlife.² So most of the world believes, with varying nuances, in what the Western world refers to as the immortality of the soul. Studies have shown that Millennials may be the least religious generation in North American history. Yet with more Americans denying the existence of God than ever before, an increasing percentage of them believe in an afterlife.³

In the era of the much-discussed “culture of me,” why does the Western world seem to believe in its own essential immortality? One baffled researcher hypothesized that it may be a sense of entitlement, or that perhaps people just want

THE CULTURE OF IMMORTALITY

Like salvation, immortality is a gift.

Sin possesses a singular, defining trait: the fatal effect of tainting its host with total dependence upon, and complete interest in, self. Once infected, hosts suffer from the illusion that they are in control. This illusion of control extends to the gifts provided by God and the environment in which we exist. In more untempered forms it even leads to the desire to control others.

When this mystery of iniquity was first manifested in a perfectly created being, the Bible says of him, “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor” (Eze. 28:17). The pathology of the disease became fully evident in Lucifer as he began to view God’s gifts as his intrinsic possessions, to covet God’s kingdom and power (Isa. 14:13, 14), and as he manipulated one third of the angels into joining his quest (Rev. 12:4).

something for nothing.⁴ I believe it is because sin has created a culture of suspicion, possession, self-elevation, and control in the self-serving pursuit of presumed happiness. Lucifer and Adam displayed these same traits and, unfortunately, they continue to this day.

In this culture relationships fade and materialism comes to the fore. With fixed mind-sets, we focus on possessing things—beauty, wealth, fame, knowledge, power, even immortality—with the belief that these define *what* we are; and we eschew the relationships that define the very essence of *who* we are.

THE QUEST FOR MEANING

Emily Esfahani Smith recorded a TED Talk in April 2017 entitled “There’s More to Life Than Being Happy,” in which she states that in a culture obsessed with the fleeting emotion of happiness a more fulfilling path can be found only in a life lived with meaning. As she grappled with her own lack of meaning, her turning point led her to conduct countless hours of research and engage in thousands of interviews. Her conclusions define meaning by four pillars: belonging, purpose, transcendence, and storytelling. In short, these pillars may be summarized as individuals’ identity based on their feelings of acceptance and belonging to a group, their service to others, their acknowledgment of a world that is larger than themselves; and their ability to craft a positive or redemptive metanarrative for their life.

As I listened, I became convinced that whether Emily Smith knows it or not, she has restated biblical lessons regarding God’s culture of immortality. We all feel that there must be more, because God has “set eternity in the human heart” (Eccl. 3:11). Yet apart from God eternity would become hell, a never-ending attempt to find happiness in self-definition and control. In His mercy, eternal life exists only through connection to Him, as He alone has life in Himself (John 5:26). In His wisdom Jesus has provided solutions to our longing.

INTIMACY AND IMMORTALITY

What do you see in Genesis 2 and 3? I see intimacy. The King of the universe stoops in the dust to form man with His own hands. He bends low to breathe life into him. To God, words alone would not suffice in the creation of humanity. No, He chose to get His hands dirty. When Adam first

opens His eyes, He sees the face of God. The first words He hears are the words of God. He is surrounded by the perfect creations of God. The love of God envelops his first feelings. What’s more, as Adam sleeps, Eve’s experience parallels his own.

In these scenes we find meaning. God has anticipated and met our core needs. We find our identity as children of God, made in His likeness. He reveals our purpose as stewards of the earth with a duty to serve His creation. As we grow in discovery of Him and His creation, He inspires epiphanies, large and small, moments in which our stories disappear in His. In the midst of our failures, God reminds us of His awe-inspiring redemptive love, and confirms His ability to recreate us in His image.

In all this a self-evident culture comes into view: love, respect, trust, other-centeredness, dependence, patience, long-suffering, mercy, grace, growth. Rather than a trait to be grasped, conditional immortality is simply a support extended by God; a requirement for us to claim our birthright as His sons and daughters (James 1:17; Rom. 6:23). What is that birthright?

According to Ellen White, our birthright is an eternal relationship with God in which “every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. . . . There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. . . . As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more [men and women] learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.”⁵

Bound by love, this relationship sets the conditions for, and defines the culture of immortality. ♣

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 45.

² Pew Research Center, “The Changing Global Religious Landscape,” Apr. 5, 2017, retrieved on July 21, 2018, from www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/.

³ Maggie Fox, “Fewer Americans Believe in God—Yet They Still Believe in Afterlife,” *NBC News*, Mar. 21, 2016, retrieved on July 21, 2018, from www.nbcnews.com/better/wellness/fewer-americans-believe-god-yet-they-still-believe-afterlife-n542966.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 677, 678.

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LIFE'S PENULTIMATE REALITY

Human attitudes about death run the gauntlet: some fear, and will not speak of it lest their words blight themselves or someone else. At the other extreme there are cultures that thrive on open mockery of it. A follower of Christ, who died and rose again and holds death's keys, can look beyond death and mortality to life unending with our resurrected Lord in a brand-new earth that will know neither grief nor loss: no more death. We offer some indicators about how people who live in North America see death and the afterlife.

—Editors

78.7 years

Average life expectancy in the United States¹

57 percent

Adults in the United States who would stop medical treatment if there was no hope for improvement.²

35 percent

Americans who would tell their doctors to do anything possible to keep them alive, even if there was no hope of recovering their health.³

62 percent

Adults in the United States who believe they have a moral right to take their own lives if they are in a great deal of pain and there is no hope of improvement.⁴

Physician-assisted Suicide

47 percent
support

49 percent
oppose

Christians⁵

72 percent

believe in a heaven "where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded."

58 percent

believe in a hell "where people who have led bad lives and die without being sorry are eternally punished."

Non-Christians (Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu)⁶

47 percent

believe in "heaven."

31 percent

believe in "hell."



¹ Huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/21/death-america-pew-research_n_4312321.html

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/10/most-americans-believe-in-heaven-and-hell/

⁶ *Ibid.*

FEELINGS OR FAITH?

It had been a tough week. You know the kind, when everything seems to fall apart. Compounding it was the pain of betrayal. A friend whom I trusted and respected had betrayed my confidence, turning away when I needed her most. *Oh, God, why does it hurt so much?*

Just when things seemed to hit bottom a family member was diagnosed with cancer. *Oh, God, when will it stop?*

I prayed. I pleaded. I read my Bible. But somehow I couldn't find the face of Jesus anymore. *Why couldn't I hear His voice? God, are You hiding Your face from me?*

The pain and fear ate away at my soul, while the sense of separation from my Father hung over me like a cloud. I had never encountered depression before, so I had no idea what it looked like. Before, I always woke up at peace, excited about what God was going to do. Now I just wanted to run away and hide. It felt as if a physical weight had settled on my chest. A boulder-sized rock to accompany the lump in my throat. *Would I ever break free?*

I tried everything I knew: praying with my husband and talking faith. Refusing to listen to the enemy's ever-present whispers—I *always knew you were no good. What kind of a Christian are you? You'll never make it.* My brave face fooled everybody. Except me. Two things happened that week, however, that would begin to change the tide; although I didn't know it at the time. First, a woman asked me to pray for her. Normally I would have jumped at the chance. Now I felt like a

failure. *Who was I to pray for someone else?*

I prayed anyway, taking her hands in mine, speaking the words aloud, even though I couldn't seem to find Him anymore. At least it was the right thing to do. Perhaps that counted for something.

A few days later our pastor asked me to speak. I usually loved sharing what Jesus has done in my life and the Scriptures He's used to bring deliverance. But how could I speak when I was still in bondage? I sat and talked with Greg, the only person who knew of my struggle.

Greg took a deep breath. "You should do it, Jilly."

The lump in my throat suddenly swelled. "You know I can't. If I were connected with Jesus, of course I'd speak. But I can't hear Him anymore, and I don't want to be a hypocrite."

"I know," Greg nodded his head. "But it's not about how we feel. If God can use Jonah, or a donkey, then we know He's not dependent upon our ability—or even our connectedness. Don't let Satan win!"

That day I made a choice. To walk by faith, not by feeling. To speak for Him, to pray to Him, to praise Him whether I felt it or not. And amazingly, as I look back, *that was the day* He began to set me free! ♣

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JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE



"I CAN'T
I DON'T WANT TO
BE A HYPOCRITE."

KAREN NICOLA

Rarely did I get a phone call while in the middle of class. Even more uncommon was pausing my sophomore Bible class to answer it. But this day I did.

The slow, steady voice of my husband immediately informed me that this was not going to be good news. As he unfolded the brief story known at that point, I felt my lungs gasp and my heart weigh down with information that would forever change our family.

At sunrise our nephew had been discovered dead, atop a portico at San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts. All evidence confirmed that he had taken his own life. The unthinkable had entered into the heart of this young man. He acted upon it to completion, leaving us, his family, to sort out the trauma, reorganize our picture of God, and continue living by whatever means we knew at the time.

UNTHINKABLE, UNSPEAKABLE GRIEF

I wish I could say we all grieved well, but I can't. But we all grieved. Suicide creates its own grief storm, and we each navigated it with the limited tools we carried. While we were able to talk freely of our love and memories of Garrett, each of us found our own isolated places to hold our feelings.

I remember a brief conversation with Garrett's dad about the hope he held of seeing his son in the earth made new. I, on the other hand, found my inner thoughts questioning and doubting my

nephew's salvation. I harbored pockets of judgment and condemnation. His action was certainly a result of his drug and alcohol use.

My heart shriveled as I drew my own conclusions for his future judgment. Bear with me—I have never disclosed these damaging inner thoughts. (I beg you, reader, to stay with this narrative so you might learn from my mistake.)

Shortly after Garrett's death the family became aware for the first time of his bipolar diagnosis. "If only we had known" was our hearts' common cry. How much we would have done differently.

As details of the last days and hours of Garrett's life began to become visible through the fog of our broken hearts, I began to reevaluate my immediate position of judgment.

ASKING DIFFERENT QUESTIONS

It didn't really matter what the details were; what mattered was that my heart began to make a shift. I began to notice that my personal conclusions were out of alignment with what I knew to be true about God. As the years have passed I am ever reminded that God has not left the judgment of my nephew (or anyone else) to my limited scope of knowledge. I have only the ability to see outward hints of someone's inward life. But God sees from the inside out!

He perfectly understood Garrett's struggles. God perfectly knew his darkest secrets and his deepest hopes. In the words of Ellen White: "He traces

WHEN SUICIDE STRIKES

Making sense of the senseless

from cause to effect.” In His perfect knowing God continued to love Garrett unconditionally.

Did not the heart of the universal Father break to see our nephew live out his mental illness to the death? Yes! Could He have stopped him? Yes.

So the bigger spiritual questions regarding suicide might be: Where is God when people contemplate, plan, and prepare to end their own lives? Where is God when mental illness, depression, and pain take any of us to the point of wishing to end it all?

I must add another line of questions: Where is God’s enemy, Satan, at all times and at all places on this earth? Is he not a vicious lion prowling about to kill and destroy? Is he not intent on harming and bringing as much pain as he can to God’s beloved children, and thus to God? Is there a real influence of evil that we all struggle with every moment of our lives?

While our Christian faith speaks of victory over evil, when anyone of us is overcome by our own desire to end our lives, God knows and understands the struggle. It is not the unpardonable sin to take one’s life. Just as it is not the unpardonable sin to break the Sabbath, to lie, to commit adultery, or to steal. We all mess up, we all sin and fall so deeply from God’s original plan for our lives. All that saves us is the limitless grace of Jesus. There I was in judgment of my beloved Garrett, just as much in need of saving as he was.

O God, please forgive me! Please heal my hard heart!

Help me trust that You alone know Garrett’s heart, his struggles, his limitations, and his need for a Savior. Help me come close to others who struggle with depression, mental illness, and pain. Help me to listen more and draw conclusions less. Please open my capacity to trust You with all the final outcomes of each of our lives.

My turnabout has developed slowly yet profoundly, all because of this: Would you look at the cross with me and see God hanging by spikes, taking in the screaming judgments of the crowd? Will you listen to the demonic mocking mob cruelly misrepresent the Father? Will you consider that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit went through this experience? Will you grant Them the full right and authority that is Theirs, that They have earned to read each heart perfectly?

As a grief coach I receive phone calls from people with heartsick voices explaining the trauma of living after loved ones take their own lives. Families struggle with the assurance of seeing their loved ones again. I could never begin to come close to their broken hearts if I carried judgment about suicide. Condemnation never brings anyone comfort, hope, or healing.

My hope about Garrett’s future isn’t built on him or me. I gave that up: now it’s built on God. ♣

* Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 517.

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PHOTO BY ALEXANDER LAM ON UNSPLASH





THE PERFECT SPOT

God's care for a grieving family, decades in the making

We lost Elliott Ranzinger on Saturday afternoon, May 13, 2017, just after he finished his freshman year at Southern Adventist University. He was only 19 years old. But even in the midst of such a terrible tragedy, God gave Elliott's family an amazing gift to comfort them.

About a week before Elliott passed away in a motorcycle accident, our planned giving team was looking through some files and found a certificate from 1999 for three burial plots that had been given to the university from Collegedale Cemetery. They had been set aside, and years later we still had no immediate use for them.

At staff worship on Monday we prayed that in the midst of the Ranzingers' worst moments, God would make His presence

known to them. On Tuesday we learned that Mark and Ruth, Elliott's parents, wanted their son to be buried on Southern's campus. He had loved Southern so much, and had made such close friends that they felt it was where he should stay.

That's when Carolyn Liers, our planned giving coordinator, wondered whether the Ranzingers could use one of the burial sites we already had.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Our chaplain's office contacted the family and offered them one of the burial plots. But the Ranzingers declined, saying they had particular desires: they wanted Elliott to be buried under a tree on top of a hill where the sunlight would shine down on his resting place. They wanted a shaded place where his family and friends could sit when they came to visit.

Thinking that it might be possible to trade our plots with the cemetery for what the Ranzingers wanted, I went to the cemetery Wednesday morning. As I spoke to the cemetery manager the Ranzinger family arrived to finalize on a location for Elliott that matched what they had in mind. My heart sank when the manager told them that very few spots were still available.

Still, I suggested that we look throughout the cemetery at the plots Southern owned. The manager led us as we zigzagged across the hills and past the grave markers in the older section of the cemetery until we reached the spot where the three plots were located.

We were standing on the crest of the cemetery's largest hill. Above us floated the lofty limbs

of a Bradford pear tree. Beautiful sunlight shone on our skin. Birds sang their soft tunes as if to comfort the tragically impacted group.

I looked at Ruth, Elliott's mother, and tears began to trail down our faces as we embraced each other. The plot was exactly what they wanted. The plot had been purchased long ago. The university had received it 18 years earlier, a year after Elliott was born.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS' TRIBUTE

Elliott's casket was made by Kamron Stock, an alumnus of Southern Adventist University and friend of the family, along with Kamron's brother; Elliott's father, Mark; and Elliott's brother, Andrew.

When Elliott's parents went in search of a casket, they struggled to find one that adequately represented Elliott. With their shiny, polished exteriors and fancy molding, none of the caskets they saw matched Elliott's unsanded personality. Elliott enjoyed the outdoors, as well as mechanical hobbies, and his family felt he should have a casket that matched his personality.

Mark Ranzinger, Elliott's father, wanted the casket to stay rough and unsanded to match his son's interests and hobbies. But Andrew, Elliott's brother, wanted a smoother, more polished casket to reflect his brother's kind, giving heart. Ultimately, the casket came to reflect both aspects of Elliott's character, with a sanded inside and a rough exterior.

Building the casket took three days to complete. Kamron said it would have been impossible to complete alone. He said they were building a treasure chest for someone's treasure.

On Saturday they held a memorial service before burying Elliott on Sunday. At the memorial the casket's cover was removed so that family and friends could sign it. Tommy Greene, son of Adventist artist Nathan Greene, drew a street bike on the cover to commemorate Elliott and his love of motorcycle riding.

THE SAD GOODBYE

Elliott was buried on the crest of that hill on May 21. Sun shone down on his grave, filtering through the leaves of the Bradford pear tree; small beams of light lit the dirt and grass on which Elliott's friends and family stood. Friends dressed in motorcycle gear and everyday clothes placed

They wanted Elliott to be buried under a tree on top of a hill where the sunlight would shine down on his resting place.

dirt on his casket as others watched. At first the grave was silent except for the sounds of shovels lifting dirt from the mound beside it. Then those watching and shoveling began to sing. They sang of Christian trial and pilgrimage through this world; they sang of the hope we have in Jesus, our hope of resurrection.

Later we learned another story that had a part in making this one possible. In 1944 14-year-old June Lynd died after being thrown from a horse. In 1999 June's sister, Virginia Orr, donated to Southern Adventist University the three remaining plots that her parents had purchased when June passed away. June was the first person to be buried in Collegedale Cemetery. Elliot and June now lie side by side. Both died similarly and tragically, and both will rise together in the resurrection.

What some might call coincidence is nothing but the hand of God reaching to a family in need. When I saw the sunlight shining on Elliott's family on Wednesday morning, I imagined God embracing and comforting them during their darkest hour.

Nothing can fill the hole in the Ranzingers' hearts left by Elliott's tragic death. But I know that God manifested Himself, showing them that He loves them, just as He loved Elliott. Prophecy proclaims: "[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

As Mark reminded us at the funeral, we each have a work, and that work is to bring the promise of the resurrection to fruition. One day we will live in a world in which there will never be another tear. ▀

Carolyn Hamilton is vice president for advancement at Southern Adventist University.

CAN OUR DEAD SPEAK TO US?

Satan's efforts to influence us about immortality and spiritualism.

Ellen White had much to say about misunderstanding mortality, and being deceived by Satan as a result. The following imagined interview highlights her warnings about modern manifestations of spiritualism.
—Editors.



The ministration of holy angels, as presented in the Scriptures, is a truth most comforting and precious to every follower of Christ. But the Bible teaching upon this point has been obscured and perverted by the errors of popular theology. The doctrine of natural immortality, first borrowed from the pagan philosophy, and in the darkness of the great apostasy incorporated into the Christian faith, has supplanted the truth, so plainly taught in Scripture, that ‘the dead know not anything.’ Multitudes have come to believe that it is spirits of the dead who are the ‘ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.’”

What is the connection between spiritualism and today's understanding of death?

“The doctrine of man’s consciousness in death, especially the belief that spirits of the dead return to minister to the living, has prepared the way for modern spiritualism. If the dead are admitted to the presence of God and holy angels, and privileged with knowledge far exceeding what they before possessed, why should they not return to the earth to enlighten and instruct the living?”

“If, as taught by popular theologians, spirits of the dead are hovering about their friends on earth, why should they not be permitted to communicate with them, to warn them against evil, or to comfort them in sorrow? How can those who believe in man’s consciousness in death reject what comes to them as divine light communicated by glorified spirits?”

How does Satan use spiritualism to deceive us?

“Here is a channel regarded as sacred, through which Satan works for the accomplishment of his purposes. The fallen angels who do his bidding appear as messengers from the spirit world. While professing to bring the living into communication with the dead, the prince of evil exercises his bewitching influence upon their minds.

“He has power to bring before men the appearance of their departed friends. The counterfeit is perfect; the familiar look, the words, the tone, are reproduced with marvelous distinctness. Many are comforted with the assurance that their loved ones are enjoying the bliss of heaven, and without suspicion of danger, they give ear ‘to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.’”

Tell us more about these “seducing spirits.”

“When they have been led to believe that the dead actually return to communicate with them, Satan causes those to appear who went into the grave unprepared. They claim to be happy in heaven and even to occupy exalted positions there, and thus the error is widely taught that no difference is made between the righteous and the wicked. The pretended visitants from the world of spirits sometimes utter cautions and warnings which prove to be correct.

“Then, as confidence is gained, they present doctrines that directly undermine faith in the Scriptures. With an appearance of deep interest in the well-being of their friends on earth, they insinuate the most dangerous errors.”

Why is Satan so successful in these deceptions?

“The prince of darkness, who has so long bent the powers of his mastermind to the work of deception, skillfully adapts his temptations to men of all classes and conditions. To persons of culture and refinement he presents spiritualism in its more refined and intellectual aspects, and thus succeeds in drawing many into his snare

“To the self-indulgent, the pleasure-loving, the sensual, spiritualism presents itself under a less subtle disguise than to the more refined and intellectual; in its grosser forms they find that which is in harmony with their inclinations. Satan studies every indication of the frailty of human nature, he marks the sins which each individual is inclined to commit, and then he takes care that opportunities shall not be wanting to gratify the tendency to evil. He tempts men to excess in that which is in itself lawful, causing them, through intemperance, to weaken physical, mental, and moral power.”

How do we recognize spiritualism today?

“It is true that spiritualism is now changing its form and, veiling some of its more objectionable features, is assuming a Christian guise. But its utterances from the platform and the press have been before the public for many years, and in these its real character stands revealed. These teachings cannot be denied or hidden.

“Even in its present form, so far from being more worthy of toleration than formerly, it is really a more dangerous, because a more subtle, deception. While

it formerly denounced Christ and the Bible, it now professes to accept both. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. God’s justice, His denunciations of sin, the requirements of His holy law, are all kept out of sight.”

How can we protect ourselves against Satan’s deceptions?

“None need be deceived by the lying claims of spiritualism. God has given the world sufficient light to enable them to discover the snare. As already shown, the theory which forms the very foundation of spiritualism is at war with the plainest statements of Scripture. The Bible declares that the dead know not anything, that their thoughts have perished; they have no part in anything that is done under the sun; they know nothing of the joys or sorrows of those who were dearest to them on earth.

“Furthermore, God has expressly forbidden all pretended communication with departed spirits. In the days of the Hebrews there was a class of people who claimed, as do the spiritualists of today, to hold communication with the dead. But the ‘familiar spirits,’ as these visitants from other worlds were called, are declared by the Bible to be ‘the spirits of devils’ (Compare Numbers 25:1-3; Psalm 106:28; 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 16:14.)

“The work of dealing with familiar spirits was pronounced an abomination to the Lord, and was solemnly forbidden under penalty of death. Leviticus 19:31; 20:27. The very name of witchcraft is now held in contempt. The claim that men can hold intercourse with evil spirits is regarded as a fable of the Dark Ages.

“But spiritualism, which numbers its converts by hundreds of thousands, yea, by millions, which has made its way into scientific circles, which has invaded churches, and has found favor in legislative bodies, and even in the courts of kings—this mammoth deception is but a revival, in a new disguise, of the witchcraft condemned and prohibited of old.”

These excerpts are taken from *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pages 551-558. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.



SEVEN SIGNS YOU'RE RAISING RESPONSIBLE, HAPPY CHILDREN

It's not as difficult
as some might think.



JUN AMPARO

Who doesn't want to be an awesome mom or dad? I'm a father of two children, and I believe raising a responsible child is one of the foremost obligations of every parent. Nothing is more fulfilling than seeing our children be successful and have the ability to cope with challenges and adversities in life.

Developing effective parenting skills, however, requires wisdom and sacrifice. A parent's patience is often tested. So are there signs that indicate our kids are indeed becoming more self-disciplined and on their way to being happy, responsible adults in the future?

The answer is Yes! Here are seven signs to watch for:

1 They do household tasks without being told.

Much time is wasted when children spend too much time watching TV and playing with gadgets. When their attention is glued to a screen, their ability and inclination to listen to instructions and obey the parent diminishes.

Regulate the amount of time your children watch television and are involved with other forms of entertainment, and patiently but consistently remind your children of their chores and other responsibilities—from doing their homework to washing the dishes to helping with yardwork. Your children are growing in maturity when they begin doing the tasks without being told several times.

Suggestion for parents: Clearly define your expectations so your children will develop good habits or routines. Set small goals that are achievable, and ensure that the children's daily schedule is posted and easily visible at home.

2 Your children understand that they cannot always get what they want.

One thing I have always admired about children is their persistence. For instance, when they ask you to buy an ice-cream cone or a toy in the mall, they will not stop asking until they get what they want. To them, giving up is not an option.

One reality of life, however, is that we cannot always get what we want—especially if we have limited resources. Your children are becoming more responsible if they understand that there are certain limitations when it comes to making requests. This is one of the critical tasks of parenthood: to make sure your children understand that it may take time or require additional chores before they can get the sought-after item.

Suggestion for parents: While every child is different, it's important to spend time talking with your children, explaining why they can't always get what they want. If it involves buying a costly item, discuss other alternatives or options, such as going to a craft store to see if it's possible to make something similar or even better for less money.

3 They are not afraid to make mistakes.

The best way to overcome fear of failure is to give your children room to explore and allow them to make mistakes. While it's painful to see your children make errors, it's a perfect opportunity to teach them how to handle frustrations and unpleasant emotions, such as anger or sadness.

Children understand that people sometimes mess up, but with support and guidance from parents they learn to become more resilient. When the habit of not giving up is being developed, children will learn not to be afraid to make mis-

takes and to become more independent.

Suggestion for parents: Encourage your kids to try new things and not to give up. Be mindful about your own response to their mistakes and failures as your attitude has an impact on your children. Be generous in giving compliments and encouragement whenever your children successfully accomplish even something small.

4 Your children don't need threats or rewards.

Getting children to cooperate can be difficult. Most kids obey their parents when the parents use punishment-and-reward approaches, which can be effective. Your children are being more personally responsible, however, when they begin choosing to listen and obey even without chocolates, lollipops, or sticker charts. They understand family expectations and rules that are neither too harsh nor too lenient.

Suggestion for parents: Make it clear that you love your children unconditionally. Children who are truly loved and supported by parents don't need threats or rewards. Be specific, however, regarding the behaviors you want, and make sure you model them yourself as well.

5 Children know their limitations and avoid comparing themselves with others.

Kids are smart enough to figure out what they are capable of accomplishing, as well as their limitations. Comparing your children with others can be detrimental and may damage their self-esteem. Although children may sometimes compare their grades with classmates, or question why they're not as athletic as their friends, with encouragement and support from parents they will begin to realize that they have their own unique skills and talents.

Suggestion for parents: Instead of comparing your children with others, express appreciation for their own talents and skills. Find opportunities to emphasize effort, tenacity, and practice over ability in order to develop self-esteem.

6 Children anticipate consequences of their actions.

As children grow in maturity and wisdom they begin to anticipate potential results of their positive or negative behaviors. Well-defined, fair, and agreed-upon consequences help to clarify to children what is and what is not OK. Not washing the dishes, not

doing their homework, or not feeding the dog, for instance, might result in the taking away of certain privileges, such as playing with friends after school or watching their favorite TV program.

The more consistently you enforce the rules, the more likely your children will do the chores without being asked—or at least without whining about it too much.

Suggestion for parents: Explain to your children the cause and effect of a certain behavior. For instance, you might say, "You will get burned if you touch the boiling kettle." Learn to visualize and use clear examples. Explain potential consequences, and remember to stick to the rules consistently.

7 They love and want to obey Jesus.

Needless to say, children who learn to love and obey Jesus are the reasonable result of having parents who have a loving relationship with God as well. Parents who are good role models will inspire children and help them to thrive and do their best. Develop good spiritual habits such as reading the Bible together, praying before going to bed, and using God-given talents at church and in ministry to others. Children will then learn to obey their parents, as well as Jesus, happily and willingly.

Suggestion for parents: If you want to raise children who love Jesus, spend quality time reading the Word of God together, and ensure that family worship is a priority in the home. Encourage your children to participate in age-appropriate ministries and other related church activities.

KEEP IN MIND

Remember that children—as well as parents—are not perfect; they will make mistakes. Be consistent but also loving and patient in your training, and you will begin to see these signs of growing maturity and responsibility in your children.

As a responsible parent, your ultimate goal is to model the behaviors and values you would like to see in your children, such as loving God, caring for others, and being patient, kind, and productive. Character is caught, not just taught; so be a good example for your children to follow. ♣

Jun Amparo is an author, school counselor, and founder of *Richly Blessed Today*, a blog about personal finance. He and his wife, Margie, live in Thailand and parent two young children, Justin and Gayle.



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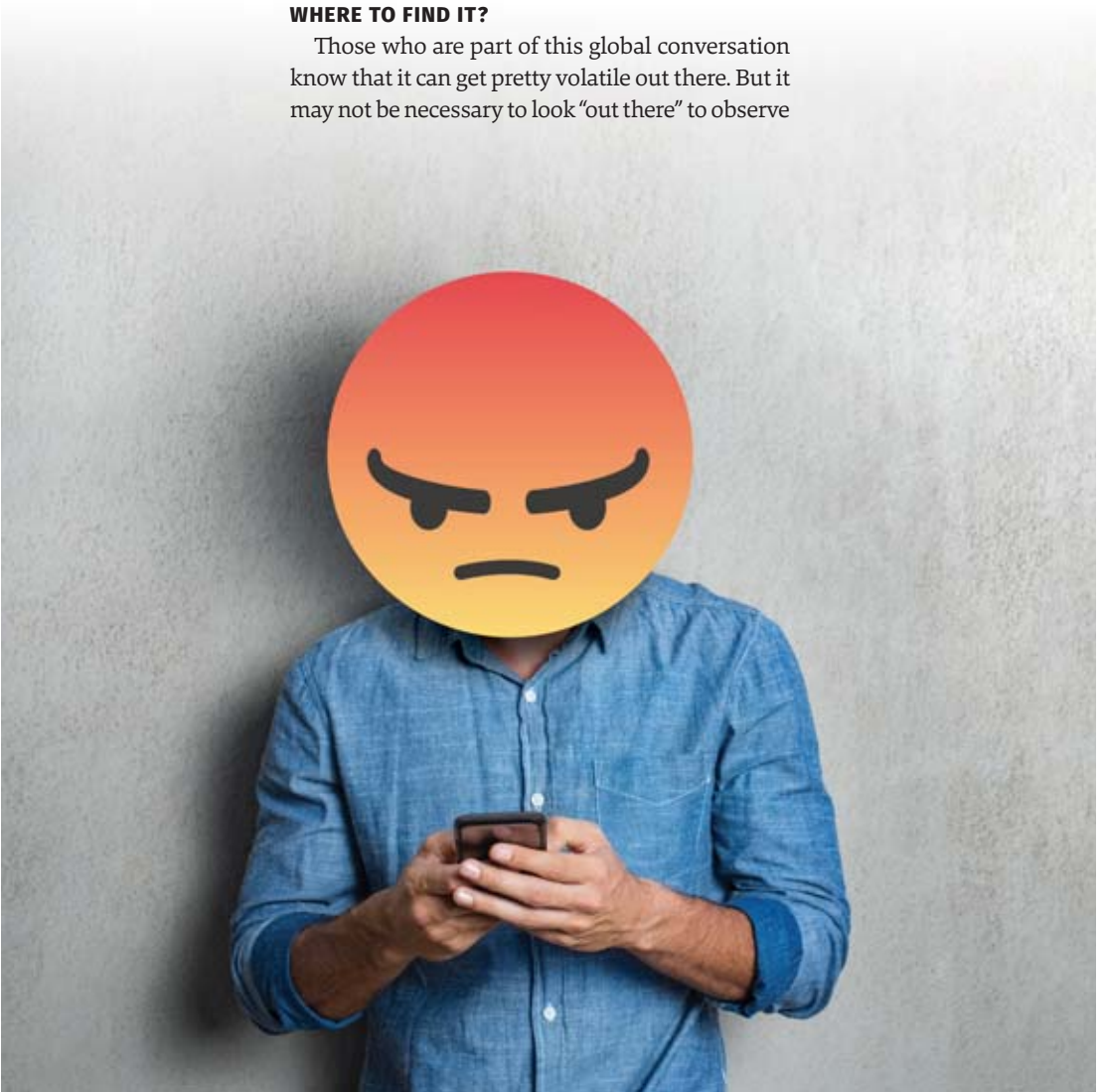
CIVILITY IN AN UNCIVIL WORLD

LEAH JORDACHE

In our world today it seems the norm for people to freely and publicly express the diversity of their minds and experiences through the seemingly innumerable avenues available through social media and the Internet.

WHERE TO FIND IT?

Those who are part of this global conversation know that it can get pretty volatile out there. But it may not be necessary to look “out there” to observe



the culture and results of contention and incivility. Sadly, our personal social media feeds, our own homes, schools, churches, boardrooms, hallways, administrative offices, and spheres of influence, already provide adequate witness. Contention and incivility are everywhere, and the church is not exempt. Incivility is a powerful trend that hasn't found sufficient resistance or boundaries, and can give the illusion that hate and intolerance are justified by strong values and convictions.

Thankfully, this social media society still allows for the possibility of finding gems of encouragement and wisdom. But when we disagree, the values of love and grace seem to be the exception rather than the rule. People seem remarkably inclined to use rightness and self-justification to excuse unpleasant words, actions, and attitudes toward others. Whatever the reason, it seems socially acceptable for intolerance and hate to trump decency and kindness in our reactions to the differences between us. Social media make it easier because we can often have our debates without ever meeting or looking each other in the eye—something that allows us to act or speak differently than we might in person.

HOW OLD IS SUCH BEHAVIOR?

We may be tempted to assume that people acting differently from a distance than they do in person is a new phenomenon; but this is an age-old reality. In New Testament times the apostle Paul alludes, perhaps amusingly, to this dynamic in his own life: "In presence [I] am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you" (2 Cor 10:1, KJV). It is easier to be bold and critical when there is distance between us and to be humble and gracious when we are face to face.

The difference now is that the medium through which we express ourselves is visible to the whole world. What was once written in private to an individual or to a specific group is now easily broadcast for the whole world to see and to weigh in on.

But why should that be? Why should so many consider their opinion or perspective important and essential enough for the whole world to hear? And why should the world then make it important enough to have a public brawl?

Further, what is the role or value of Christianity in circumstances like these? Does it call us to bring something better, or stand for something differ-

ent? It surely must, given the privilege of God's grace that has drawn us "out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

As Paul explains, this dynamic transformation never comes to an end as "we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). Widely famous examples of God's continuously transforming miracle are the famous eighteenth-century slave trader John Newton, and John Bunyan, from the century before, once known by those around him as "the ungodliest fellow for swearing they ever heard,"¹ engaging, according to his own testimony, "in all manner of vice and ungodliness."² Ellen White wrote: "John Bunyan was redeemed from profanity and reveling, John Newton from slave dealing, to proclaim an uplifted Saviour. A Bunyan and a Newton may be redeemed from among men today. Through human agents who cooperate with the divine, many a poor outcast will be reclaimed, and in his turn will seek to restore the image of God in man."³

Their example, and White's comment, show that the miracle of transformation never ceases within us, nor does its impact ever cease to be felt by those around us. Christians who are in constant transformation are also, in their turn, constantly serving as God's agents for restoring His image in others around them. It may be asked quite fairly: If we aren't reflecting the image of God in the world, then what are we doing? If my faith makes no difference in the world when it comes to the question of civility, then what is its worth?

OUR CHRISTIAN CALLING

As those who follow Christ, even when we have enemies we are called to love them (Matt. 5:43-48); though I wonder if it has become too easy to make enemies these days. Nobody needs to harm anybody: all that's necessary is a disagreement, or different preference for being or doing. Remarkably, these minor distinctions now warrant hatred even between Christians, with full character judgments standing on a single bit of information about an individual's political or religious perspectives, parenting or educational philosophies, lifestyle practices, even race or gender.

Jesus said: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31, 32).

I may blame exterior circumstances all I wish, but it's what's inside that counts when I get bumped.

Once convicted that we have found the truth, we are ready to serve as its champions, passionate about its values and our perspectives, with little distinction between the two. But whether our angle on any aspect of truth is entirely accurate or not, we need to remember that *how* we express ourselves may communicate more about our truth and its values than *what* we say.

Having “the truth” leads to wars against “error,” being whatever we now choose not to have. It is often in the expression of our rightness that the true measure of our characters is revealed. Our civility or lack thereof may be more about inner feelings, general mood, or overall temperament, i.e., our inner emotional world, than about objective distinctions of conviction.

Personal experience permits me to acknowledge the pointedness of Jesus’ evaluations: “Anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment” (Matt. 5:22); looking lustfully makes you guilty (verse 28); “if your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell” (verse 29).

I may hold my peace in public. No one may hear the comebacks, negative judgements, grudges, and scenarios in which my wit is winner or my cutting retort draws blood. But I know that as long as I still entertain them within me, choosing to privately revel in the payback or the win, I damage my soul as much as putting it out there for the whole world to see.

I recently saw an unattributed meme that encouraged you to picture yourself holding a cup full of tea. Someone bumps into you, spilling the tea everywhere. The question: “Why did you spill the tea?”

Different responses suggest themselves: “because someone bumped me,” or “because the cup was full,” or other choice or blame-filled responses. The author’s answer: you spilled tea because there was *tea* in the cup. If there had been some other liquid in the cup, then *that* is what you would have spilled. The point being that what the cup contains is what it will spill when someone bumps into you.

With regard to civility, it’s what we have inside that will spill out when others in life bump into us; when we face conflict or difficulty in our relationships. I may blame exterior circumstances all I wish, but it’s what’s inside that counts when I get bumped.

MODEL CHRISTIANITY

Discussion and debate will go on as to the cause and effect relationships between social media and incivility. But there is no doubt that social media provide many opportunities for us to bump into others, and for others to bump into us. The question we each must face is: What will come spilling out? Are we spending time focusing our lives on Jesus, filling our cups from the wellspring of living water that will bring life and healing to the world when it spills over, or better, when we pour it out joyfully? For as Jesus promises, we will always have more to spill and pour out with the living water that He gladly pours into our cups, water that is itself “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).

Modeling civility in an uncivil world is different from passivity, going along with whatever happens, and maintaining peace at all costs. Modeling civility means craving justice and contending for righteousness just as “the prophets who were before” us (see Matt. 5:6-12), and standing up for purity of soul as much as peacemaking (verses 8, 9). “The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7). As people who have unlimited access to the love and grace of God through our knowledge of Jesus Christ, not only are we empowered to be civil in an uncivil world, but to lead our world by example through the difficult conversations of life. 🦋

¹ digitalpuritan.net/john-bunyan/.

² en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bunyan.

³ Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 236.

Leah Jordache has served as a pastor and ministry leader in the Seventh-day Adventist church for the past 18 years.

THE RECITAL

Recently David, a seminary colleague, invited me as guest speaker for the upcoming Master's Recital Seminar his students are required to attend. The Master's Recital applies to rigorous levels of physical work and intellectual dialogue. My seminary had a performance evaluation, thesis presentation, professors' roundtable and dialogue about the thesis, and an observation of me leading a vespers program on Friday night and leading worship on Saturday morning.

To prepare for the speaking appointment, I go through old journals and find side notes of questions and Bible searches, comments on how important every translation and transcription are. I see the confluence of my research before and during seminary. I remember.

I sit in the airplane wondering: *What will it be like? There is a schedule to follow; different professors and local clergy will observe my work. Will it go as planned?* The title of a book of poetry comes to mind: *Telephone Ringing in the Labyrinth*, by Adrienne Rich. *"How interesting: the calls we receive to serve in mission and ministry are not always easy to accept. Sometimes there is pause, regardless of previous studies; this is where you are called to serve. So pick up the phone, because the call is for you."*

In the first hour at the hospital I am paged to three patient visits: The first requested a male chaplain; the second requested a Caucasian chaplain; the third invited me in, and I had the luxury of 45 minutes with family and patient before the patient's surgery. After the first hour the hospital becomes familiar: code blue, visiting patients and families; charting; leading spirituality groups. My mentors

follow, observing. Twenty-nine hours later I have a day to rest.

The following day is full of questions. *What is the social perception of my church's mission? My understanding of its mission?* Questions on Scripture and specific Bible passages; Fundamental Beliefs; my church's definition of chaplaincy and pastoral care, and examples of how I will serve within these guidelines. Then the personal questions: *How did you decide to become a chaplain? Why is volunteering not enough?*

When I finish the first part of the presentation, I hear a voice from the back of David's classroom: "You passed the Master's Recital. How do you feel?"

As if somebody placed a heavy backpack on my shoulders and opened a door into an unknown world. Uncertain of what is packed, my immediate reaction is to check the side pockets where I always pack a small weathered Bible; once I feel it there, I walk ahead.

"I feel blessed."

During the break David thanks me for "keeping it real," making the pastoral-care students aware that prejudice still exists in hospitals. "I heard the phone ringing in the labyrinth, questioned my ability. After teaching in the secular universities, you know, we have seen it all." I smile, admiring his honesty, sharing that reality.

The Holy Spirit guides us through the journey toward service. We begin the preparation for service by going through experiences and jobs that inform the challenges ahead. I believe it's mostly part of our prayer: "Here am I. Send me!"

And He does. ♣

Dixil Rodríguez, a university professor and volunteer hospital chaplain, lives in Texas.

SEARCHING
THE OBVIOUS
DIXIL
RODRIGUEZ



WE BEGIN THE
PREPARATION FOR
SERVICE BY
GOING THROUGH
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JOBS THAT INFORM
THE CHALLENGES
AHEAD.

CULTIVATING CHRISTIAN CIVILITY

What can we do to turn things around?

MIKE TUCKER

When I informed a friend that I was writing an article about Christian civility, he responded, “Oh, the fine art of tolerance and wishy-washy compromise!”

My friend’s definition misses the point that in the Christian life civility centers on the kingdom of God where two great commandments guide: love for God and love for our neighbors as ourselves (see Matt. 22:35-40). These commandments apply even to enemies (Matt. 5:43-48).

CIVILITY AND RECONCILIATION

Civility in God’s kingdom demands a commitment to reconciliation, the heart of the gospel. When conflict begins to produce bitterness, we are reminded of our obligation to follow the procedure Jesus detailed for us



in Matthew 18:15-20. Reconciliation is indispensable in the lives of Christians. Reconciliation is so important that Jesus told His followers to leave their sacrifice on the altar and fix their disputes first, if they had one (Matt. 5:23, 24).

We certainly have the right to hold convictions and take strong stands on important issues. But there's a right way to state right positions: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). Christian civility involves disagreeing with dignity as well as dignifying those with whom we disagree.

Lutheran scholar Martin Marty has noted that many people who are quite civil do not have strong convictions; and many people who have strong convictions are not very civil. Marty suggests that we need to cultivate something he calls "convicted civility." Christians have a responsibility to speak up, debate, and persuade people. But we are to do so with the same gentleness and meekness that characterize the teachings of Jesus.

Paul's brief definition of Christian civility may be the best I can find: speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). It appears that many, especially those on social media, have attempted to follow only half of Paul's instruction. They "speak the truth" as they perceive it, but nowhere in their speech can we find a trace of love.

The principles of civility apply to every relationship. John and Julie Gottman are numbered among the world's preeminent researchers on marriage relationships. They describe a quality marriage as one in which both parties have determined that they will treat each other as best friends, and that they will resolve conflict in kind and gentle ways. Isn't this the sort of thing Jesus had in mind, not just for marriage, but for members of His church?

Jesus said: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34, 35).

CIVILITY AND THE TIME OF THE END

The Internet is rife with vitriol and cruelty among Christians. It appears that few remember Jesus' specific demand of face to face resolution. One man told me, "The issues are too important, and time is too short to follow Matthew 5 or Matthew 18. Imme-

diately, direct action is required. A clear, prophetic voice is needed, regardless of who is offended!"

Years ago during one of my camp meeting assignments, I visited the youth tent. Students from one of our universities had been leading out in worship. They had ministered to the teenagers at camp meeting all week in a variety of ways.

After the song service a guest speaker opened with a scathing critique of the college students for their choice of music. The youth in attendance watched to see how the college students would react. To their credit, these students made no visible reaction to the rather caustic remarks.

Once the meeting was over I found the group's leader and asked whether the guest speaker had spoken to him directly about the music before his public attack. The leader assured me that he had never met the speaker and had not been contacted before the criticism.

The following week I contacted the speaker via e-mail to share my concerns. The speaker maintained that the students' sin justified the ferocity of his attack. I offered that sin is a violation of Scripture and the general law of love for God or others. I suggested that he may have been in danger of elevating his opinion regarding the music performed by the students to the same level of authority as Scripture. The speaker then discontinued our conversation.

Upon reflection it occurred to me that the only person who had directly violated Scripture was the guest speaker, who had not followed the clear instructions given by Jesus in Matthew 18, not to mention the admonition of Paul to "speak the truth in love."

In *The God Who Is There*, Francis Schaeffer wrote: "There is nothing more ugly than an orthodoxy without understanding or without compassion." Those words ring true as we listen to interactions in church foyers and read exchanges between Christians on social media.

CIVILITY AND SANCTUARY

Jesus' goal is often unmet in today's church. But as bad as things may be in local churches, the problem is exacerbated with online communities where the most vitriolic, hate-filled speech is flung around between Christians on Facebook, Twitter, or on comment pages from the Web sites of Christian publications. The more controversial the topic of

conversation it seems, the more bitter the speech.

Issues such as women's ordination, contemporary Christian music, church governance, politics, even church unity, all seem to generate speech that is anything but unifying. The perceived anonymity of the Internet gives birth to name-calling, character assassination, and worse. The assumption appears to be that anyone who disagrees with my view on the topic is intentionally attempting to pervert or destroy the church.

How can we help? While none of us can single-handedly change the church or the world, we can, by God's grace, begin to change our little corner. We do that by controlling the only person God asks us to control. God asks that we, by the power of the Spirit, change ourselves. He does not ask us to change others.

Where do we begin? What things should we, by God's grace, focus on to make our disagreements more civil?

Richard Mouw, author of *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*, offers three suggestions for handling disagreement: *empathy*, *curiosity*, and *teachability*. Mouw writes that empathy requires us to "reduce the psychological distance between ourselves and others."¹ Empathy takes the focus off self. It allows us to view things from another's perspective. It forces us to engage in the most basic activity required for reconciliation. It forces us to listen to each other.

Next, Mouw urges us to be **curious**. He writes: "We ought to want to become familiar with the experiences of people who are different from us simply out of a desire to understand the length and breadth of what it means to be human."² I find that I am less likely to be curious if I am more intent on being right than on being loving.

Last, Mouw **asks us to be teachable**. "To be empathic and curious in our relations with other people is to want to learn about them."³ This may involve learning from people with whom we disagree. This does not mean that we give up our own opinions or deeply held convictions. But by listening and being teachable we better understand our own beliefs and increase our understanding of the world by being open to hearing how someone else's viewpoint might be different.

Of course, being teachable acknowledges that we could be wrong. Through the years my views have changed and matured. Things I used to be so certain

of I now disavow. New insights to Scripture, or simply the wisdom that (one would hope) comes with advancing age, has caused me to reevaluate my previously held convictions. Listening to those who disagree with me has often been the impetus to changing my mind. I pray that I will always be open to the possibility that I am wrong or that my opinion needs to mature. Otherwise I stunt my growth.

CIVILITY: A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

I must add one further idea I have been forced to adopt, to combat my own tendency to be uncivil toward those who are unpleasant in their disagreements with me. You might think of it as a spiritual discipline—a practice designed to help a person develop a more Christlike character. I call my new discipline "the forfeiture of the perceived right to self-defense."

My tendency to defend my character or reputation puts me in a mode of argumentation and self-justification. But I have observed that defensiveness is the enemy of intimacy. When I am busy defending myself, or attempting to convince you that I am right, I am unable to listen. Listening is the key to understanding, reconciliation, and unity. Arguing over who is right and who is wrong does nothing to promote unity or intimacy. I have now lost enough to learn that being "right" is overrated, while being "loving" is vastly underrated.

This is not an easy discipline to employ. I fail at its use as often as I succeed. But when I am quiet and stop defending myself, I am usually able to hear beyond the words being shared to discern a point of pain or fear behind the words. Finding a point of pain opens the door to true intimacy. It also opens the door to the possibility of ministering to the person who was attacking me. When I defend myself, I often find I have forfeited any possibility of future ministry to my attacker.

There is no easy road to Christian civility. But true followers of Christ have no other choice. We must commit to "speak the truth in love," or perhaps cease speaking at all. ▀

¹ Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010) p. 58.

² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

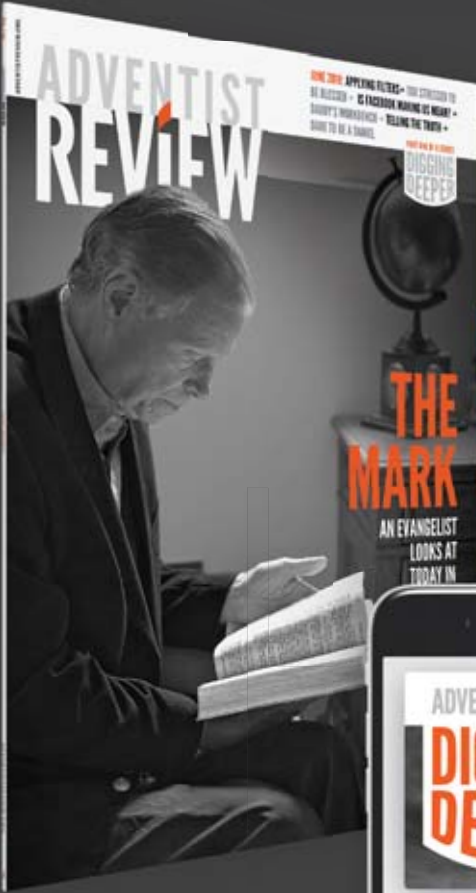
Mike Tucker is speaker/director of the Faith for Today media ministry.

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PHOTO BY ETHAN SYKES ON UNSPLASH

LEAN IN A LITTLE CLOSER

Before we judge

**BARBARA COUDEN
HERNANDEZ**

I boarded a puddle jumper flight to our little town. As I got to my window seat, a man was already sitting in it. There he sat, disheveled, looking out the window.

“Excuse me, sir, but you’re in my seat.”

His head jerked toward me unsteadily. “Oh, are you supposed to sit here, ma’am?”

He slid out of the seat so I could climb in next to the window. As he sat down he was

clearly pretty well boozed up. “Where are you headed?” I asked, a little too cheerfully.

“Penneldon,” he slurred loudly. The woman in front of us winced.

He smiled broadly at me, revealing the remains of his last meal caked on his front tooth. “How ‘bout you, ma’am?”

Before I could reply, he continued, “I’m just coming back from Alaska. I’ve been up there for four months. Just got out

before the ice came. I could've been snowed in; then I never would've been able to get out."

He leaned into me, pressing me even further into the corner. "So I'm very glad to be sitting beside you on this plane today, little lady!" His breath was nauseating, and his voice was entirely too loud for polite conversation. Seconds later my seatmate's head was back on the headrest and he was asleep, mouth wide open, snoring.

CLOSE QUARTERS

As I busied myself grading papers, I eyed this vile-smelling man. His clothes were clean but rumpled. His personal hygiene—well, he had very little. He appeared to be in his 60s, but as with many drinkers, he probably looked older than he actually was. The stubble on his chin, his gnarled hands, and the lines in his face seemed to distract from his obvious desire to connect with other people. I found it sad that maybe he was a friendly guy with lots of promise who had simply gone in the wrong direction at some point in his life.

My musings were interrupted as the man began to lean into me even more. His arm and left leg pressed against me, and his head began to lag in my direction. *Oh, please, no!*

Just as I pressed myself against the window to get away from him, the flight attendant came through the cabin with in-flight beverages. My seatmate roused himself, his face lit up, and he asked for wine. I should have known. He looked delighted as he gulped it down before drifting off again.

The man's bloodshot blue eyes had somehow touched me. I asked myself what Jesus would have done with someone like him. Engage him in conversation about his eternal soul? Touch on the very pains that made him turn to drinking? Reassure him somehow? Would Jesus have talked to him about other aspects of his life, to point out that his value and experience is about much more than what he drinks? Would he have offered some suggestions about how to stop drinking?

If Jesus were to chat with my seatmate, He'd probably talk to me, too. I knew what I'd want to hear from Him: reassurance that I am loved by God; that my past has been forgiven; and that there isn't anything my imperfect soul might devise in the future that would cause God to stop loving me. I would want to know that no matter what,

His head began to lag in my direction. Oh please, no!

Christ would hold me close, cover my imperfection with His grace, and empower me to overcome my troublesome character flaws.

GRACE UNLIMITED

As I sat studying the tip of my pen, it dawned on me that I might be like this man in many ways: I eat too much (gluttony, it's called), and it doesn't seem to go away but is a constant, vexing battle. What makes me so different from my seatmate? Clean teeth, minty breath, clear skin, the ability to think clearly, a bank account, and probably much less pain in my life. But if the flight attendant had offered us chocolates, I'd have gobbled down a couple and wished for a third. I am no different, really.

Maybe the only thing I could do was to stay with him—shoulder to shoulder, as one more sinner, one more member of the human family for whom Christ died.

So the drunkard and the glutton rode quietly together for the duration of the flight: one slender, the other sober.

As the plane lurched and soared toward its final destination two people greatly in need of God's grace sat shoulder to shoulder, waiting to see what God would do in their lives. Wherever my seatmate is now—waking up from a bender, or on his way to church—God is as merciful to him as He is to me. He is loved of God no less and no more than I am.

As I lean back from the table at a church potluck or lay out a balanced meal for my family, God's goodness and love bathe me as much as it flows to my seatmate, wherever he is.

We're really all the same, all in need of what Jesus came here to give us. Every one of us. ✦

Barbara Couden Hernandez writes from Yucaipa, California.



THE DIVINE REACTION TO CORRUPTION

*Am I serious enough about
tithes and offerings?*

BEATRICE S. NEALL

In tropical countries there exists an insidious parasite that can attack a thriving palm tree and cause its downfall. It is called the strangler fig. It works by dropping a seed into a crevice of the palm.

DEADLY EMBRACE

The seed in that crevice sprouts and sends out long roots that descend to the ground beneath, where they take root and increase in size. Soon there

is a parallel growth of thick roots spreading out across the outside of the palm tree in a deadly embrace. The parasite sends out competing branches until it completely overwhelms its host. The palm survives for a while with a few fronds peeking over the wild growth. But eventually, all life is choked out of the palm tree, and the whole structure crashes to the ground—palm and parasite together. It's one of Satan's long-proven ways

of operating in the lives of individuals and institutions.

The stranger fig's embrace of the palm is not an embrace of love. It is a union of exploiter to exploited that leads only to death. And our world has seen too many such unions. Certainly, destruction is not the intent of many unions between honest MBAs and the firms they embrace. But greed unharnessed has found a way to destroy many good businesses and many good individuals.

The world of commerce has given us many vivid examples of the corruption that greed produces, as well as the cost of that corruption: the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s; the Enron scandal of the 1990s; the collapse of government institutions in 2008; and, as if to top it off, Bernie Madoff's huge embezzlement of people's investments. Human greed knows no bounds, even when it threatens the very economy of the nation.

FOLLOWERS OF GOD NOT INSURED

Conversion does not guarantee a follower of God against yielding to greed anymore than it does against any other temptation. The spirit of greed has often had success with the people of God. When Israel was conquering the land of Canaan a man named Achan stole "a beautiful mantle from Shinar, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels" (Joshua 7:21)¹ and hid them in the earth under his tent. The thievery of this single individual was disastrous to the whole nation. "The anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel" (verse 1).

Achan's hidden sin—concealment of his action and burial of stolen goods in the camp—made it impossible for Israel to stand against its enemies. The Lord explained to Joshua: "Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant . . . ; they have stolen, and lied, and put [stolen goods] among their own stuff. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies" (verses 11, 12). We tend to be much more relaxed about sin than God is. His anger against Achan's theft and concealment, which violated His agreement with Israel, was not appeased until Achan and his family were publicly exposed and executed (verses 24, 25).

In the days of the kings the prophets inveighed against the evils of greed. Ezekiel prophesied against the shepherds of Israel: "Ho, shepherds of

Israel who have been feeding yourselves! . . . You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves . . . , but you do not feed the sheep" (Eze. 34:2, 3). "Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds" (verse 10).

Malachi, God's messenger and the last prophet of the Old Testament, warned that the coming Messiah would be severe: "Who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire . . . ; and he will purify the sons of Levi" (Mal. 3:2, 3). Messiah stated that He would "draw near" for judgment (verse 5). God's evaluation is not superficial. One of His accusations is that His people are thieves and full of gall: "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How are we robbing thee?'" (verse 8).

How do humans steal from God? We steal from God when we retain, misappropriate, or embezzle funds belonging to Him. Listen as He denounces the nation: "You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you" (verse 9). Can flagrant offenders suppose that they will escape the wrath of God? "Behold the day comes, burning like an oven when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 4:1).

HOW GOD DEALS WITH THIEVES

Jesus found the spirit of greed thriving in His Temple. He cried out, "You shall not make my Father's house a house of trade" (John 2:16). Whip in hand, He drove out the money-changers, buyers, and sellers, scattering their ill-gotten gain. When nothing changed after two attempts to cleanse His Temple He withdrew His presence. "My Father's house" became "your house," as greedy people degraded its condition to "forsaken and desolate" (Matt. 23:38). Forty years later it collapsed in a bloody inferno.

The early church was not immune to the spirit of greed. Ananias and Sapphira falsified the amount of their donation to the church and were struck dead (Acts 5:1-10). Their punishment is for our own counsel: "Now these things happened to them as a warning, . . . for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11). These examples show the Lord's indignation when corruption invades His church. He will take stern measures to cleanse it from evildoers.

Conversion does not guarantee a follower of God against yielding to greed anymore than it does against any other temptation.

ARE WE STILL STEALING?

Is it possible that such evils could worm their way into the Adventist Church today? Could there be parasites choking the lifeblood out of our institutions and organizations? Could embezzlement exist among us? Do we have the moral strength to search ourselves for our weaknesses? Or to welcome those who “in a spirit of gentleness” (Gal. 6:1) point out to us our flaws?

Or do we react against those who hold the mirror up to our face? It would be sheer tragedy if the organization once sacrificially nurtured by the pioneers of the Advent movement should ever become subverted by greed or other corruption, whether among our rank and file or at administrative levels of the church.

Ellen White, who as a messenger of the Lord² stands as a modern counterpart to ancient Malachi, shares strong counsel against robbing God in our time: White saw “that many who profess to be keeping the commandments of God are appropriating to their own use the means which the Lord has entrusted to them and which should come into His treasury.”³ She speaks of the common duty of leaders and people to work toward the church’s betterment, with the solemn understanding that “God holds His people, as a body, responsible for the sins existing in individuals among them. If the leaders of the church neglect to diligently search out the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon the body, they become responsible for these sins.”⁴

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is growing at a rapid pace; and such care, attention, and shared moral sense will do us well in all parts of the world and at all levels of our operation. Financial faithfulness by individual church members everywhere must ever be matched to ethical uprightness by all those who receive,

process, disburse, invest, and otherwise wisely and honestly exercise their divinely appointed stewardship with regard to those funds.

As the Holy Spirit waits to descend in latter-rain power upon us, we may all accept Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are holding to your faith” (2 Cor. 13:51), a faith defined, not by doctrinal theory alone, but by godly practice as well.

Here are some questions I ask my conscience: Have I been transparently honest in my use of the funds that flow through my hands? Have I been frugal in my personal use of the Lord’s money and generous in responding to the many appeals for help? Have I “eaten the fat” while neglecting to feed the flock under my care? Have I worked for personal aggrandizement? Have I helped safeguard the Lord’s treasury? Are there leaks I could have plugged in the dike around God’s treasury? There are certainly more.

As we probe our own souls, let us also tactfully and graciously provoke one another to “love and good works” (Heb. 10:24) that include honesty and transparency in all our dealings with the Lord’s tithes and offerings.

HOW WILL IT END?

Even now we may remember God’s promise to “bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil” (Eccl. 12:14). What does our Judge require of us? He offers more than one answer. To Micah He says “do justice,” “love kindness,” “walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). To Solomon He says: “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

Isn’t this what we mean when we pray for revival and reformation in our church? ♣

¹ Bible texts in this article are quoted from RSV, the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1946, 1952, 1971, by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

² Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), p. 160.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, p. 269.

⁴ *Ibid.*

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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

WATER: Facts, Fiction, and Fraud

Q: Years ago drinking water was simple: tap, cooler, or fountain. Today I counted 32 kinds of water in the supermarket, and friends say that “[de]ionized alkaline water” is best! Really?

A: Great question! Water is the “elixir of life.” We need five to 13 gallons of clean water daily for drinking, cooking, and hygiene, based on our size, body composition, diet, climate, activity, medications, and medical condition. Any guidelines must therefore be general.

Water is now big business. Some scientists claim that commercial interests drive the dehydration dogma and “sell sickness” for corporate profit. Supermarket aisles bear witness to the effect of marketing: “simple water alone is not good enough.” Variety is based on origin, composition, and treatment. Commercial names are often misleading: e.g., “alpine springs” water may come from the lowlands.

Hygienic-water processing is prudent for safety; yet chlorination and fluoridation of drinking water still stir controversy despite proven benefits. Magnetic water treatment has no health benefit. Natural fresh water from rain-snow, wells, and springs may contain minerals, dissolved gases, or elements such as sulfur. But *adding* these chemicals, vitamins, or fruit flavors provides dubious health

benefits. Filtered, purified, distilled, ionized, tap, desalinated, and sparkling water are all “treated” waters. Alkaline water is specifically processed to remove acidic compounds or to add alkaline compounds (e.g., bicarbonate). Pure water is neutral—neither acidic nor alkaline—while raw rainwater is slightly acidic. It’s important to know that human blood is slightly alkaline, tightly controlled, and unaffected by diet in normal people.

Alkaline (ionized) water became popular because of health claims (see table). Research sponsored by water-treatment companies has caused added confusion. There is no conclusive evidence that significant health benefits accompany the drinking of alkaline water in otherwise healthy individuals. Actually, eating fruits and vegetables provides physiological dietary alkalinization without extra cost while avoiding environmental pollution with plastic bottles.

Drink the most hygienic, environmentally friendly water you can. Avoid fads. Despite living in a sin-scarred world, we may drink freely of the Water of Life as we walk daily with Jesus. 🙏

Peter N. Landless, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of the General Conference Health Ministries Department. **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

Claims Regarding Alkaline Water	Evidence From Scientific Studies
Increases longevity	High-alkaline water is associated with longer lifespan in rats (not humans) and also retarded growth.
Prevents/treats cancer	No significant research exists. No proof for or against; one small study showed association between dietary acidity and bladder cancer. Alkaline diet may increase the potency of some chemotherapy.
Prevents osteoporosis caused by dietary acidity	No association of dietary acidity and osteoporosis. Dietary alkalinity showed no protection against osteoporosis.
Improves bone health; prevents osteoporosis	Small beneficial effect on bone “dissolving” (comparing alkaline with acid-rich water-drinking); osteoporosis not prevented.
Prevents/treats acid reflux disease	Highly alkaline water (pH 8.8) deactivates a stomach protein (Pepsin); may reduce stomach acidity (not necessarily a good thing).
Cures psoriasis	Topical Rusanda water spa helpful in plaque-like psoriasis.
Heals type 2 diabetes, hypertension, abnormal blood lipids	Thirty-six months of alkaline water-drinking accompanied improvement in these conditions in one small study.

RUSSIAN PASTOR IN REFRIGERATOR CELL REFUSES PARDON



**CARTER REPORT
ADVENTIST
HEROES**

Paul was placed in a refrigerator cell because he operated a tiny Gospel printing press in his home. His jailers were Communists. They offered him a pardon if he would spy on his church family. "Nyet," said the prisoner. So, they put him back in the refrigerator

cell until he was freezing and then brought him out and warmed him up. The guards then repeated the offer of pardon. Prisoner Paul said, "Nyet." So they beat him and put him back inside the ice box. They repeated the process. Freezing and warming. They did it for three years...

We call him Paul the Prisoner. When I first met him in Moscow, just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Paul was gaunt and haggard. During his time of torture at the hands of the Communists, his teeth had rotted and fallen out. Now he was proudly wearing new dentures.

Although his body was emaciated, somehow, he projected an image of immense strength. Christ shone through this battered and bruised soldier of the Cross. We collaborated on a new project: the translation of a series of grace filled Gospel presentations for the Russian pastors. The West Russia Union had decided to sponsor with The Carter Report a School of Evangelism at the Christian Cultural Center in Nizhni Novgorod. Paul and some former prisoners now threw



themselves into the work of translating. Their work resulted in our Russian publishing house producing 10,000 books that proclaimed the supremacy of Christ and the glory of His cross. These books would be used and distributed at the School of Evangelism. Hundreds of pastors and thousands of church members would benefit. They would help kindle a Gospel fire across Russia. Without Paul, this would not have happened.

Pastor Paul continues to share the Gospel story, visiting those grim Russian fortresses where today tens of thousands are incarcerated. He understands their pain, he too was a prisoner. ❖

For the glory of God, we proudly proclaim Pastor Paul Mickityuk, aka Paul the Prisoner, as a distinguished Carter Report hero.



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You may view Pastor John Carter on 3ABN, FOX WTTG in Washington DC, Amazon Fire, Apple TV, ROKU, SAFE TV, and HOPE Ukraine. Also tune in on 3ABN Radio.

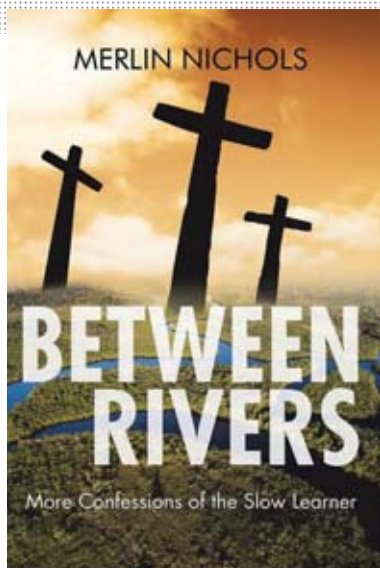
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CLOSER LOOK



CLOSER LOOK

Between Rivers

Between Rivers: More Confessions of the Slow Learner, by Merlin Nichols, WestBow Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 2017, 268 pages. Softcover, US\$18.27 (Kindle edition, US\$3.99). Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

You probably don't know the name Merlin Nichols. Other than the fact that he is the mayor of Chetwynd, British Columbia, his name and reputation are not all that prominent.

But reading his most recent book, *Between Rivers: More Confessions of the Slow Learner*, will make you feel as if you're old friends. The book is packed with memories, experiences, reflections, and Scripture lessons he has gathered over a lifetime.

Most, but not all, of the book is made up of applications and amplifications of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). So it deals with broad topics; such as God as our heavenly parent; doing God's will; being provided for; forgiving and being forgiven; and dealing with temptations. Sections and

subsections are dealt with in a folksy, homespun way—not as a pastor or theologian might approach them, but as a friend sharing thoughts and experiences over dessert, or a grandfather entertaining his grandchildren.

This is not to minimize the author's approach. On the contrary, the book is filled with lessons and morals that are not only scriptural but eminently practical. This is the kind of book that one would do well to read a chapter each day as part of daily devotions, or as a thoughtful meditation before turning out the light at night.

Nichols, an elder in his local Adventist church, knows his way around the Bible. His applications and his many apt illustrations offer lay leaders in local churches, especially those who occasionally have to preach or to teach a Sabbath School lesson, lots of material to share with their appreciative congregations.

Between Rivers is a wonderful introduction to a man whose journey reflects what it means to know Jesus and to enjoy the adventure of following Him.



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CONQUERORS AT LAST

Ever since death became part of the human experience, humankind has searched for ways to postpone, even cheat death. But only Jesus' death and resurrection provide the power and promise of our ultimate victory over the grave. Death is no longer a one-way ticket to a hole in the ground. In Jesus we are more than conquerors.—Editors.

As a pastor in a Protestant church, my whole ministry centers on the conviction that by grace we are saved through faith. And it's not our faith that delivers us, as if believing something, anything at all were pleasing to God. It's the object of our faith—Christ's life, death, and resurrection—that saves us.

KEVIN DE YOUNG

Christ could not be held down by the bands of death. In fact, through death He was paralyzing the one who had the power of death, and He was setting His people free (Heb. 2:14, 15). What seemed to be defeat was actually victory. The Resurrection morning was Hell's gloomiest day. Satan saw the wisdom of God and tasted defeat.

SINCLAIR B. FERGUSON

The truth of the Resurrection gives life to every other area of gospel truth. The Resurrection is the pivot on which all of Christianity turns and without which none of the other truths would much matter. Without the Resurrection, Christianity would be so much wishful thinking, taking its place alongside all other human philosophy and religious speculation.

JOHN MAC ARTHUR

At the heart of Christian faith is the story of Jesus' death and resurrection.

JOHN ORTBERG

The best news of the Christian gospel is that the supremely glorious Creator of the universe has acted in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection to remove every obstacle between us and Himself so that we may find everlasting joy in seeing and savoring His infinite beauty.

JOHN PIPER

Immanuel, God with us in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us, or rather we with Him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and Second Advent splendor.

CHARLES H. SPURGEON

**Every parting gives
a foretaste of death,
every reunion a hint of
the resurrection.**

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER



I didn't become a Christian because God promised I would have an even happier life than I had as an atheist. He never promised any such thing. Indeed, following Him would inevitably bring divine demotions in the eyes of the world. Rather, I became a Christian because the evidence was so compelling that Jesus really is the one and only Son of God who proved His divinity by rising from the dead. That meant following Him was the most rational and logical step I could possibly take.

LEE STROBEL

If one does away with the fact of the Resurrection, one also does away with the cross, for both stand and fall together, and one would then have to find a new center for the whole message of the gospel.

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

Two thousand years ago, in the Middle East, an event occurred that permanently changed the world. Because of that event, history was split. Every time you write a date, you're using the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the focal point.

RICK WARREN

The miracle which Christ was about to perform, in raising Lazarus from the dead, would represent the resurrection of all the righteous dead. By His word and His works He declared Himself the Author of the resurrection. He who Himself was soon to die upon the cross stood with the keys of death, a conqueror of the grave, and asserted His right and power to give eternal life.

ELLEN G. WHITE¹

Our waiting is not nothing. It is something—a very big something—because people tend to be shaped by whatever it is they are waiting for.

BARBARA BROWN TAYLOR

Over the rent sepulcher of Joseph Christ had proclaimed in triumph, "I am the resurrection, and the life." These words could be spoken only by the Deity. All created beings live by the will and power of God. They are dependent recipients of the life of God. From the highest seraph to the humblest animate being, all are replenished from the Source of life. Only He who is one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death.

ELLEN G. WHITE²

The Resurrection completes the inauguration of God's kingdom. . . . It is the decisive event demonstrating that God's kingdom really has been launched on earth as it is in heaven. . . . God's new world has been unveiled in Jesus Christ and . . . you're now invited to belong to it.

N. T. WRIGHT

Outside of the cross of Jesus Christ, there is no hope in this world. That cross and resurrection at the core of the gospel is the only hope for humanity.

RAVI ZACHARIAS

¹ *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 530.

² *Ibid.*, p. 785.

Seasoned and Lit

Two of the metaphors Jesus used to describe His followers in the Sermon on the Mount are salt and light. “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13); and “You are the light of the world” (verse 14). He *didn’t* say, “Try to be salt and light”; He said, “You *are* salt and light.”

It’s hard to imagine more basic, common elements than salt and light. They’re both so simple, yet so essential. What would life be like without salt to season our meals and balance the minerals that maintain our physical and emotional health?

TO BE EFFECTIVE
REFLECTORS OF
CHRIST’S LOVE WE
HAVE TO BE PROPERLY
SEASONED WITH THE
HOLY SPIRIT.

Where would we be without light? Under certain conditions we can see in the dark. But we certainly can’t appreciate colors, hues, and textures without light. And light is infinitely variable in all its manifestations: dawn, noontime, dusk, moonlight, cloudy, clear, etc.

Most of the time we notice salt and light only when there’s too much or too little of them. Too much salt spoils a meal; too little makes everything bland. Too much light is blinding; too little leaves us stumbling around in the dark.

There seems to be here an object lesson for those of us who follow Christ. We can come on so strong that we alienate those we’re trying to influence for the kingdom. We can be so passive and uninvolved that nobody knows about us or cares about our message.

Clearly, being salt and light is not something done mindlessly or carelessly. It takes all the cunning, careful, and mindful spiritual processes available to reach people where they are in all their complexities and varieties, and reflect Christ in settings that

are just right: not too much, not too little.

Surely this is what we should pray for as we venture out each day to do our assorted responsibilities. Life, after all, is not scripted. We never know from hour to hour precisely what opportunities will come our way, or with what situations we’ll have to contend. We know only that to communicate the flavor of Christ’s love effectively we have to be properly seasoned with the Holy Spirit.

Anybody who thinks this isn’t important hasn’t been paying attention to the headlines and social media feeds of the past couple years. Society is by turns becoming more vocal, more segmented, more militant, and more violent. Where are we Christians? What is our influence, if any? Are we making things better, or worse?

Some like to observe that during Jesus’ ministry He spent all His time teaching and preaching about the kingdom. But He was also deeply invested in providing real, material benefits for those who followed Him. He gave away free food or free health-care. He was often found among society’s outcasts. In fact, one of His detractors’ chief complaints about Him was “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2).

What if the same was said about us?

As Christians and Christianity seem to become more insular and restrictive, it is well for us to remember that we *are* salt and light. Salt is good only when it gets out of the saltshaker. Light is important to the extent “that [others] may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). 🍂

Stephen Chavez is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.

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TO THE END

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;
and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth.

ACTS 1:8

GYC has always been dedicated to a radical adherence to the Word of God. Acts 1:8 gives the promise of power, given directly by the Holy Spirit, to be faithful witnesses to the whole world. At this year's conference, there will be a focus on missions. All over the world, people are dying for a lack of knowledge about who God is. Together we will be exploring the exciting possibilities that God has in store for young people who desire to be His witnesses to the end.



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